

The Goodwill Messenger

Published by the Village Church of Cummington

Ministry: All of us

Church Office: 634-5508

Service 10:00 AM, 1st & 3rd Sundays

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cummingtonvillagechurch.org

Village Church—Open and Affirming—You are welcome here

Our Message This Month

The Christmas Eve service was attended by 30–35 people. It was nice to see people wanting to keep the Christmas Eve Service tradition going. Somehow the old feelings and memories pull us back to carols and lessons and the idea that Christmas is more than spending money, more than worrying that someone won't think we love them if we don't find the perfect gift. And more than worrying that someone didn't love us because we didn't get the perfect gift.

The original Christmas wasn't about the value of gifts of course. It wasn't about gifts at all, except the gift of one who could help us find a way to be whole and holy in spite of ourselves in this world.

Which begs the question—what is Christmas to each of us? I know for a fact that in this crowd there is a wide variation in the belief of the Christmas Story. Some here do not believe in this story at all—some will say Christians stole all the ideas from earlier pagan religions—the idea of a Messiah itself, the virgin birth and more; and some will think there is some factual detail—the birth of an influential teacher, one who raised some resistance to Rome, and whose story has been embellished—and I am sure some here believe implicitly in the story of the birth of Jesus as it is written.

The thing is, it is all true, whatever you believe, and you are all right.

This is a story that for some of us came with our mother's milk. Briefly, there is the annunciation to Mary, that she will be the mother to a new king, whose kingdom will have no end; there is Joseph saving her from disgrace. They have to leave home and travel to Bethlehem because of a census, and Mary has to give birth in a stable, because there is no room for them in the inn. Shepherds and angels abound, wise men visit with gifts. Then they have to flee to Egypt because Herod is afraid of this new king being born and orders the boys under two years old to be killed.

And there is no documentary proof of any of this. No record of this census—and the Romans, whatever their faults, were killer record keepers—just a few references here and there in the literature of the times—except of course for the New Testament, written after the death of Jesus.

Even tho we celebrate this story with light, there is darkness. There is an unwed mother who faces hardship and disgrace. There is a family forced to bring a child into the world in dire circumstances. There is a family which has to flee persecution to other lands.

Is any of this unfamiliar to us? Don't some of you know or know of an unwed teenage mother who needs help? And hear the voices of those quick to condemn her? Not everyone has a Joseph. Don't any of you know someone whose life has changed for the worse and is living in reduced circumstances? Maybe you are in that position yourself. And I think we have all seen the photo of the drowned child on the beach, whose family was fleeing war in Syria. Families are still fleeing persecution and death.

This story was true before the birth of Jesus, it was true in his time, and it is true in our news today. Over and over again thru the ages, it is a true story.

But it's not all grim. Our Christmas story may encompass a whole range of suffering but it also encompasses a whole range of hope—after all, the baby lived. That is where our hope starts. And after this birth we celebrate, the baby became a man who told us that the kingdom of god is within us, if we choose to look; who told us blessed are the poor, the hungry and the weeping. Who said blessed are you when you are hated and reviled. Love your enemies, do not condemn, forgive and be forgiven.

And that is why we can come here today and celebrate in joy and companionship, and we can rejoice with heart and soul and voice. Give ye heed to what I say, Jesus is born today. This babe became a man who showed us how to live.

Aging Gracefully in the Hilltowns!

A Community discussion group is sponsored by the Council on Aging. It focuses on Living Fully, Aging Gracefully, and Befriending Death, open to all residents of the Hilltowns.

The group—always open to new members—meets at the Cummington Community House library, Main Street on the second Tuesday of each month from 1–3 PM.

For further information please contact:

Wynne or Lucy, 634 5576 wynlucy@gmail.com or Annie, annieb@crocker.com

No Church Service in January

The Village Church will be closed in January to save on heating bills. We will be back "in service" on February 4th at 10 AM.

However, there will be a church council meeting on January 7, at 10 AM.

For personal, church needs or questions please contact one of the Deacons, John Maruskin at 634-5320, Kathleen Knox at 634-8041, Josh Wachtel at 634-5005 or leave a message at the church 634-5508.

Friday Night Café

The Artful Codgers (Guitar, Dan Fersh; banjo, Art Fuleihan; bass, Joe Bloomenthal; Violin, Brian Johnson) performed their particular brand of homey music on December 8. There was not another Café night in December because of Christmas.

This month Dave Bartley and Blue Jazz come back on the 12th. The members of this group play around Western MA and is quite talented. We are pleased to have them back.



Artful Codgers

Artist Speaks Opening

The Hilltown Arts Alliance will be hosting an Opening for The Photography Show and Artist Speaks event on Sunday, January 7 at 3 PM at the Hilltown Community Development Corporation building 387 Main Road, Chesterfield.

Amy Morgenweck of Otis will be speaking about her work. Ed Pelletier, Jan Roby, and Kate Ewald, all of Worthington will also be participating.

The show is up now and will end March 4. Refreshments will be served. For more information contact Kevin O'Connor at krdoconnor@gmail.com.

To rent the church space for classes, concerts, meetings, etc., please call Scott at 413 320-6544. The church charges a very nominal fee for upkeep & heat. We love having the building used!!

Messiah Sing

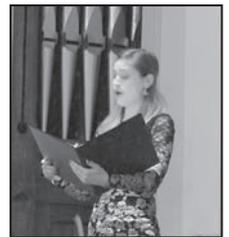
The 53rd Annual Messiah Sing-along was a big success. Over 80 people came to sing and there was an orchestra of over a dozen including the trumpet. Soloists were Kristi Spicer, soprano; Lisa Woods, mezzo; Dario Coletta, tenor; and Steve Curylo, bass.



Steve Curylo



Lisa Woods



Kristi Spicer



Dario Coletta



The Singers

The Goodwill Messenger, deadline for the February 2018 issue is January 26. Any personal news, an event, a business to promote with a paid advertisement or anything else worth noting please send to John at mrblooz@verizon.net or Pat at patakeith@gmail.com, mail to VCC, PO Box 76, Cummington, MA 01026 or leave it in the drop box, marked GWM located in the back entryway of the Village Church.

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