



# Herald of Good TIDINGS

*“Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, ‘Behold your God!’”  
~ Isaiah 40:9*

**Nov. 30<sup>th</sup>**

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent

**Dec. 7<sup>th</sup>**

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent  
Communion Sunday with  
Deacons’ offering/ food pantry  
Guest singer/musicians 10 a.m.

**Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>**

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Advent  
10 a.m. service

~ *First Congregational Church* ~



~ *All Are Welcome* ~

**Dec. 21<sup>st</sup>**

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Advent  
Christmas Sunday  
Service 10 a.m.

**Dec. 24<sup>th</sup>**

Christmas Eve  
5 p.m. Family Service  
11 p.m. Candlelight  
Communion Service

Other December activities include **“Parents’ Night Out”** on **December 5th** from 6 to 8 p.m., followed by **YOM’s party** (we will do an \$8 gift exchange). The **Christmas Potluck and Sing-along** will be held on **December 13th** at 5 p.m., and look for our annual **Cookie Walk** during coffee hour on **December 14th**.

## The Christmas Fund 2014

The generous gifts of UCC congregations and individuals to the Christmas Fund enabled the Pension Boards’ Ministerial Assistance program to provide some form of ministerial assistance to impact the lives of hundreds of persons during the past year.

- **Christmas “Thank You” gift checks** totaling \$235,800 were sent to 543 retired UCC clergy/lay church employees. This special gift at Christmas time reminds these Veterans of the Cross that they have not been forgotten.
- **Monthly pension supplementation** for 408 lower-income retired UCC clergy/lay employees. Our retired clergy/lay employees relied on this income supplementation for basic needs such as food, utilities, living and/or medical expenses. Pension supplementation totaled \$1,342,000 in 2013.
- **Quarterly health premium supplementation** for 239 lower-income retired UCC clergy/lay employees. These funds subsidized premiums for the UCC Medicare Supplement Health Plan with Rx so that individuals could afford/receive quality health care. Assistance totaled \$508,000 in 2013.
- **Emergency grants** for 65 active or retired UCC clergy/lay employees. Grants assist in covering unexpected costs such as: large medical expenses or home damage resulting from natural disasters.



Your gifts are needed more than ever to help the growing number of retirees whose low income annuities make it difficult to meet increased living costs. Enclosed in this month’s *Tidings* is an offering envelope. Please return it to the church (128 Central Street, Auburn, MA 01501) and **thank you** for your generosity.



The "Pumpkin Patch" is closed for another year. We unloaded over 4200 pounds of pumpkins and we thank everyone that helped. It went very fast this year and we started selling even before the truck was empty.

This year we made a bigger profit than any other . . . over \$8,200.00 for the church. We had a great variety of pumpkins and gourds this year and met many great people. There were many familiar faces who have been coming since the first year and take pictures in the "patch" with their children.

A special thank you to Bob Murray who once again had the equipment and made unloading faster and the cleanup (the pig farm trips) fun and quick. Shirley and I had a great trip to the pig farm which ended our co-chairing on a fun note . . . Thanks!

We look forward to helping the people who have stepped up for next year and know the season will only make more for our church.

Thank you to Denise and Judy for all that you do . . . The "Patch" could not run without them. They fill in whenever there are no volunteers and send out e mails for help and to give the congregation info. Thank you!

Thank you,  
Shirley Hill and Diane Moore



**A huge thank you to Diane Moore & Shirley Hill for all their hard work resulting in yet another successful fundraiser this year!**

**Sermon Titles for December**

- 12/7 ~ Communion & Special Music Sunday
- 12/14 ~ "Comfort, O Comfort"
- 12/21 ~ "Mary & Elizabeth, Jesus & John"
- 12/24 ~ "Christmas Pantomime" - 5 p.m.
- 12/24 ~ "Return Praising God" - 11 p.m.
- 12/28 ~ "The Song of Simeon"

Thank you to everyone who has returned their pledge cards for 2015. If you haven't yet responded, please do so as soon as possible (**even if you're not pledging**) so that we can save on costs associated with a follow-up letter.

Thank you,  
Your Stewardship Committee

**Coffee Hour Hosts:**

- 11/30 Board of Education
- 12/7 Historian & Memorial/Scholarship & Nominating Committees
- 12/14 Prudential Committee
- 12/21 Outreach Committee
- 12/28 Personnel Committee
- 1/4, 11 Trustees
- 1/18, 25 Music Committee

**FROM THE TRUSTEES**

The trustees are accepting bids for snow-plowing and sanding the church parking lot. Please mail bids to the attention of the Trustees or place in their mailbox on Sundays. If you have any questions, contact Todd Dube, [toddube.bdsupply@verizon.net](mailto:toddube.bdsupply@verizon.net) or 508-864-6601.

Thank you —



### FROM THE PASTOR

In the Advent season we prepare for Christ's birth. In preparing for his birth, we also think of his death. Almost everything in the Gospels either told of how Old Testament prophecy applied to Jesus or else pointed to his passion and resurrection.

The favorite Old Testament lessons for Advent come from Isaiah. I think we have all read this:

*For a child has been born for us,  
a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders;  
and he is named  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

Isaiah the prophet is writing at a time of great tumult, like the time Jesus lived in. The Jews have lost their independence and are now ruled by a great empire. The people wish to be free again. Isaiah rights about a different kind of King:

*For he grew up before him like a young plant,  
and like a root out of dry ground;  
he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,  
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.  
He was despised and rejected by others;  
a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity;  
and as one from whom others hide their faces  
he was despised, and we held him of no account.*

After the trauma of the crucifixion and resurrection, the followers of Jesus saw in Isaiah clues to understanding Jesus and his mission. Isaiah goes on to describe the suffering servant.

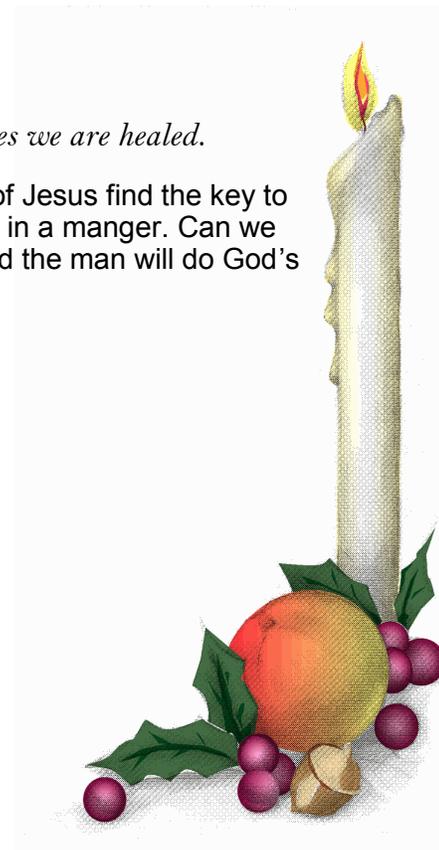
*Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases;  
yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted.  
But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities;  
upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.*

And so, in a book written 500 years before Jesus was born, the first followers of Jesus find the key to understand Jesus' life and message. We love the baby Jesus, so fragile, lying in a manger. Can we also love the man so fragile tied to the tree? The baby will become the man and the man will do God's good work.

*The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous,  
and he shall bear their iniquities.  
Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great,  
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong;  
because he poured out himself to death,  
and was numbered with the transgressors;  
yet he bore the sin of many,  
and made intercession for the transgressors.*

May God intercede for us. May we lay all our sins at the feet of Jesus that he may count us among the righteous.

God bless —  
Pastor Brian



From the Director of Religious Education

This upcoming Christmas season is a busy one in our church.

**November 30** will begin our Advent Season. EACH Sunday the Sunday School children will begin up in the sanctuary so we can see the lighting of the Advent candles and have a short message from Pastor Brian. We will then proceed downstairs to complete our lesson.

**DECEMBER 5 is the ANNUAL PARENTS NIGHT OUT**

I will have a signup sheet in fellowship hall and you can sign your child(ren) up to have a fun evening with the youth group while you take a few hours and enjoy a dinner out or some last minute shopping. We start at 6pm and provide the children with pizza and juice (please let me know if an alternate is needed) and then we have games, crafts and possibly a movie. Pick up is at 8 at which time YOM will have their Christmas party. There is a free will donation for the youth group to raise money to attend Monadnock Bible Conference this winter.

**December 13 is the HOLIDAY SING-ALONG and potluck supper.** All the festivities start at 5:00. Jackie Knox will be our guest pianist.

**December 14 is the ANNUAL COOKIE WALK** - Please consider contributing to our cause either by bringing in old/new reusable containers, baking, and/or purchasing cookies. This is a great gift for the office or family get together.

**DECEMBER 21 Pageant Rehearsal** will immediately follow service in the sanctuary. We will have a **Pageant at the 5:00 service on Thursday, Dec. 24.** Any and all children are encouraged to participate. All the speaking parts will be filled by the Confirmands. The service is not long, so if you have other family commitments that evening please consider starting the evening off with the true celebration of Christmas and ask your family and friends to join you at the service. Who can resist a little child in a sheep or angel costume?

Again this year, the youth group has decided to raise money to participate in the Winter retreat at Monadnock Bible Conference called "Encounter." We need to raise \$136.00 for each of the participants plus three chaperones. We have a rough estimate of 10 YOM members. So we will be doing more fundraisers to help achieve our goal. The RADA knife fundraiser is also still going. All information can be obtained online by going to: [www.helpourfundraiser.com](http://www.helpourfundraiser.com) Enter our order # 505046 and enter this password: [afucc](#). A greeting will appear acknowledging that your purchase will benefit our church.

Thank you to all my volunteers. I could not do this without you! I also want to thank the Board of Ed members that will be leaving us. We will be looking for new members, so if you are interested and want to have a say in the education of our church family, please see Pat Bukoski or me. Our meetings are usually the third Tuesday of the month at 6pm.

May the TRUE blessing and meaning of Christmas be in your hearts this holiday season and the coming New Year.

Jean McPherson, Director of Religious Ed.



Church member, **Donald E. Woodcock**, 88, of Auburn, passed away peacefully at home on November 13, 2014. Born and raised in Sterling, Don was the son of Leon A. and Luella B. (Arnold) Woodcock, and lived 57 years in Auburn. Don attended Leominster High School and enlisted in the U.S. Navy at the age of 17. He honorably served his country during World War II. After marrying Marion E. Mason in 1951, together they settled in Auburn where they raised their 3 children. He worked at Norton Co. in Worcester retiring in 1989. Don was a member of our Church where he served as a Deacon. He was a chaplain and member of the color guard with the Hiram O. Taylor American Legion Post 189 in Sterling. Don enjoyed woodworking, painting and working in his garden. First and foremost, he was a family man and looked forward to spending time with his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He leaves his wife Marion E. (Mason) Woodcock; his 3 children, Dorothy Woodcock, Jeanette Temple, and Charles Woodcock and his wife, Karen; 2 brothers, Leon Woodcock, Jr. and R. James Woodcock; 6 grandchildren; 9 great-grandchildren; and several nephews and nieces. Don is predeceased by a sister, Madge Courtney, and a son-in-law, Donald R. Temple. A funeral service was held at our Church on November 17th. Burial was held privately. Memorial donations may be made to the Memorial Fund at the First Congregational Church, 128 Central St., Auburn, MA 01501; or Veteran's Inc., 69 Grove St. Worcester MA 01605. Please be in prayer for the family during this time of loss.

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## *Happy Holidays from Here We Grow Preschool*



*The children and staff are busy preparing for the fast approaching holiday season. We look forward to the holidays, the excitement they bring, and the time off it allows the staff to have with their families.*

*Moving on to the events which took place in November, the children of **Here We Grow** learned about the first Thanksgiving and the act of giving to others. They had the opportunity to bring in food items for the Giving Basket. Denise and Judy sorted the foods which were then distributed to families in need throughout Auburn.*

*We celebrated our Thanksgiving feasts on Tuesday the 25<sup>th</sup> with the 4-year-old children and on Wednesday the 26<sup>th</sup> with the 3-year-old children. Both days went well with a lot of help from our parent volunteers. Our appetizer was cornbread which was made by the 3-year-olds, a friendship fruit salad and dip, vegetables, cold meats, cheese and crackers, and for dessert we had brownies (which were made by the 4-year-olds) topped off with cool whip. Thank you to our helpers who helped with carrying the tables and chairs to the vestry.*

*With plans well on the way for the next winter holiday, the children have gone from singing and acting out Thanksgiving songs to singing songs for our winter holiday programs. During the month of December, **Here We Grow** will participate with the Auburn Police Department in the collection of toys and items for infants to 16 year olds. The police department will distribute everything collected to children living in Auburn. Collection dates are 12/1-12/12.*

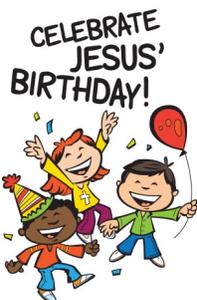
*The holiday programs will be on December 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>. A tradition we have had is that the 4-year-old children will sign and sing "Happy Birthday" to Baby Jesus.*

*After the holiday party/program on Tuesday, the staff will enjoy a relaxing lunch and gift giving time.*

*The school will be closed from December 24<sup>th</sup> -January 2<sup>nd</sup>, returning on January 5<sup>th</sup>. The **Here We Grow** staff and families wish all of you a safe and happy holiday season.*

*Until 2015, Happy Holidays to all.*

*Dawn Murphy, Director, **Here We Grow** Preschool*



### **Happy birthday to:**

Rebecca McPherson ~ Dec. 28th  
Lori-Ann Stockhaus ~ Dec. 28th  
Donald Slongwhite ~ Dec. 30th

### **D.U.C.K.S.**

**(Dedicated United Christian Kindred Spirits)  
UNO FUNDRAISER FOR 2015 RELAY FOR LIFE**

The D.U.C.K.S. are getting a jump start on next year's Relay for Life. UNO's Pizzeria & Grill will donate up to 20% of your check when you dine-in or takeout now through Dec. 14th! **Special color coded certificates/coupons are required and are available in Fellowship Hall or by contacting Jean McPherson.**

## OUTREACH NEWS

I hesitate to say that it has been a *good* year for the Outreach committee. We were able to support multiple service agencies, as well as provide Shaw's gift cards to help supplement our food pantry. However, if all were as good as it could be, there would be nothing lacking and everyone would have what they need. We were honored to help the following agencies:

**Auburn Youth & Family Services** (also our guest speaker at our Palm Sunday breakfast)

**Dismas House** - we also visited and prepared a meal this past summer

**Aids Project**

**The Audio Journal**

**AJWC** - funding for new community sign at Auburn Fire Dept.

**Fisher House** - houses the families of veterans while they receive treatment at the VA Hospital; we are planning a visit in December or January

**Worcester Fellowship** - participating in their service and providing lunch on Nov 30<sup>th</sup> along with our confirmation class.

AND our congregation sent \$980 and 49 bags to Haiti to be distributed on Christmas Eve. 49 families in Haiti will experience not only the love of our Savior, Jesus Christ, but the love of a congregation thousands of miles away. <3

We still have a few dollars left in the Outreach budget for the month of December. If there is something you would like to see funded before the end of the year please let any member of the Outreach Committee know.

In His Name We Serve,

Jennifer Bohn, Laurie Babcock, Ron Hanks, Ellie Lowell and Lynda Clifford

### LIBRARY TIDINGS by Gloria Whitehead

WHETHER YOU'RE 5 YEARS OLD OR 95 YEARS YOUNG, HAVE YOU BORROWED A CHRISTMAS BOOK BEFORE FROM THE CHILDREN'S LIBRARY? THEY WILL BE ON DISPLAY IN FELLOWSHIP HALL, AS WELL AS IN THE ADULT LIBRARY FOR YOU TO BROWSE AND BORROW – A CHRISTMAS BLESSING THAT WILL SHARE THE HOLIDAY SIGNIFICANCE WITH YOU.



*For the grace of  
God has appeared,  
bringing salvation  
for all people.*

Titus 2:11, ESV

## HOLIDAY CRAFT FAIR

Presented by Auburn Recreation & Culture

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13<sup>TH</sup> 9 A.M. TO 3 P.M.

30+ craft vendors will help you get into the holiday spirit and Santa will be making an appearance from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. (so bring the kids!). There will be activities, food, raffle, face painting and so much more! Please support the concession stand run by F.A.M.E. (Friends of Auburn Music Education). Look for a schedule of events in the *Auburn News* or go to [www.auburnguide.com](http://www.auburnguide.com).

For more info please call 508-832-7736 or email: [kpappas@town.auburn.ma.us](mailto:kpappas@town.auburn.ma.us)



Holiday Craft Fair

**December Music**

- 
- 12/7 Advent Litany  
 "A Song of Christmas"  
 First Church Choir  
 Sicilienne Op 78 G. Fauré  
 Krzysztof Gadawski — violinist  
 "Silent Night" Montpaul  
 Krzysztof Gadawski — violinist  
 "Rejoice Greatly, O Daughter of Zion" Handel  
 "Ich Will Dir Mein Herze Schenken" Bach  
 "Ave Maria" Schubert  
 Rebecca Palmer, soprano Andrew Altenbach, piano
- 12/14 "Call the Baby Jesus"  
 "Christmas Songs of Joy"  
 First Church Choir
- 12/21 "Breath of Heaven"  
 "Prayer of Promise"  
 First Church Choir
- 12/24 5 p.m. "A Prayer for Peace" Joyful Noyse  
 Michael Schillinger, guitarist
- 11 p.m. Hymns:  
 "Go Tell It on the Mountain"  
 "The First Noel"  
 "Silent Night"
- 12/28 "Mary Did You Know?"  
 "O Holy Night"  
 First Church Choir

During times of inclement weather, we have set up an account with WBZ - TV Channel 4 enabling us to report Church service cancellations. However, if weather is severe enough to result in area power outages, we may not have the capability to contact them. So you should always use your best judgment, exercising caution when deciding whether to venture out to service during stormy weather.

**PLEASE NOTE:**

Due to high fees and interest charges, the Church will no longer be accepting credit card pledges starting in January 2015. If you have any questions, please give me a call at 508-317-7747.

Thank you,  
 Lori-Ann Stockhaus

**SUNDAY SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS:**

- 12/7 Heather Caouette  
 12/14 **Volunteer(s) needed**  
 12/21 Elizabeth Allain  
 12/28 **Volunteer(s) needed**  
 1/4 Shannon Hartmann  
 1/11 Lynn Largesse

Weekly Volunteer: Laurie Babcock



Christmas arrangements made of fresh greens will once again be available for you to purchase during coffee hour on Dec. 7th. All the greens are gathered locally, so there is no expense involved. All monies taken in will go to the church's general fund.

When doing your holiday shopping keep these in mind; they make lovely hostess gifts and most are suitable for a table centerpiece.

We enjoy making these and hope you will support this small fundraiser.

Judy Murphy & Cindy Dube

Also on Dec. 7th, look for the return of the Church Fair with a decidedly Christmas theme. Items for sale will be displayed in Fellowship Hall during coffee hour. Come, and browse; you're sure to find something — whether to complete your holiday decorating, a Christmas gift for that special someone, or a "just because" gift to yourself!

Please plan to join us on **Tues. Dec. 9th, at 5:30** for the movie, *White Christmas*. This will be featured in conjunction with a potluck supper.

**On January 20th** we will be discussing the Book of Enoch which may be obtained at the following site: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/boe/>.

So, mark your calendars, and we'll see you there!



On Nov. 16th we celebrated the baptisms of Isabelle Dorothy Stone and her brother, Brandon Scott Stone. Isabelle, 5 1/2, and Brandon, 3 1/2, are the children of Theresa and Scott Stone.



Congratulations to the Censabella Family on the recent birth of Parker Thomas Censabella on Oct. 21st. He was 7 lbs., 6 oz., 19 inches at birth. Parker is welcomed by big brother, Caden, and parents, Jim and Lindsay.

On Nov. 30th we celebrated the baptism of Syllis Everett Roy, the 6 month old son of Jenae Bjork and Joel Roy. Syllis is the great-nephew of Judy Bjork.

We pray for God's continued presence, guidance, and blessing on these precious children.

Last year, through the generosity of the community, Auburn Youth and Family Services provided food baskets and gifts to 147 needy families. The need is greater this year and we anticipate that we will assist even more families! The gift of "giving" is the true meaning of the Holiday Season. We are in need of donations of gifts, food, financial support, and volunteers. If you are interested in making a gift or food donation, please contact Megan Sutter at 508-832-5707, ext. 10. If you are interested in making a monetary donation simply mail in a check (payable to Auburn Youth and Family Services) or visit our website to donate via credit card.

Thank you so much for your continued support of our Holiday Giving Program. Your gift of time, talent and/or funds will make a true difference in the quality of life for Auburn families.

Sincerely,  
Sally D. D'Arcangelo, Executive Director

Suggested Food Donations: (Christmas deadline is Dec. 15th)

- |                 |                |                         |                               |
|-----------------|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| juice           | cereal         | canned soups & pastas   | baby food/formula             |
| Parmalat milk   | gravy          | instant potatoes        | cranberry sauce               |
| instant oatmeal | tuna fish      | canned veggies & fruits | stuffing mix                  |
| mac 'n cheese   | puddings/jello | peanut butter & jelly   | English muffins/loaf of bread |



The month of December is Safe Toys and Gifts Month. December 1st is World Aids Day and December 7-13 is National Influenza Vaccination Week. This month can be a very joyous month for some and a very sad month for others. Please be aware of those that might not be looking forward to Christmas. This is a time to remember that Christmas is the birthday of Jesus, and not the commercial holiday that is in the stores.

The closet, at the beginning of the educational wing, has medical equipment, i.e., walkers, commodes, canes, etc. If you need something and it's there, please take it. If you need something and it isn't there, please call me. I know of some equipment that doesn't fit in the closet.

It's the time of year for colds and flu. Wash your hands!

Merry Christmas to all. Have a safe and healthy month.

God Bless!

Debbie Pranaitis, Parish Nurse

At long last we have finalized the fair – all silent auction items have been picked up and paid for. We did indeed break the \$6,000.00 mark. Yahoo!!

I also want to take this opportunity to say how I felt God working from the moment this journey began. I think he likes church fairs too!! As before, I got WAY more than I gave to this project...new friends, a renewed sense of community spirit, and a return to days when life was a little simpler.

Every time I asked for something, someone in some way responded. When I sent out the various wish lists, almost every one was met. I have started several times to make a list of those who MUST be thanked, but I realize that if I mention people by name, I will surely forget someone. I have to at least say thank you to the core people who headed the tables, and were there every step of the way. Soooo many others stepped up to the plate. You know who you are. Special thanks to Judy Murphy – my new soul sistah.

Most of us have already committed to next year!! Wish lists will begin right after the holidays – as will craft nights. They were so much fun, no one wanted to stop them. I will have a meeting right after the first of the year with thoughts of this year's fair, how it could be improved, and changes that could be made. I think we will be able to expand it for next year. I am very anxious to have feedback from anyone – good and bad.

Again, thank you to all from the bottom of my heart. Your talents, generosity, and enthusiasm are astounding. Most importantly, thank you, God, for allowing us to come together in this very special way.

God bless you,  
Cindy Ryan



As they've done in years past, the Deacons will be delivering Christmas baskets/stockings to shut-ins. We're planning to prepare/assemble baskets on Dec. 13th as part of the Christmas carol sing-along & potluck get together. (Remember, the potluck begins at 5:00 p.m.)

Please look in Fellowship Hall for a list of items that are needed and a donation sign-up sheet, or call the church office if you would like to donate.

**ATTENTION ALL COMMITTEES/BOARDS:**

All budget requests are due immediately.  
Please place in Trustees' mailbox.

**ANNUAL REPORT SUBMISSIONS ARE DUE JANUARY 4TH.**

Once again the Boy Scouts will be selling Christmas wreaths and cemetery baskets/logs on the Church lawn on Sunday, Nov. 30th and Dec. 7th. Your support is much appreciated.

Delivery is available. Please call George Fournier at 774-239-2240.

*TIDINGS is a monthly publication of*

**First Congregational Church,  
United Church of Christ**  
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*God's church in Auburn Center  
doing Christ's work in the world.*

*Web: [auburnfirstucc.org](http://auburnfirstucc.org)*



BULK RATE  
U.S. POSTAGE  
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Non-Profit Org.  
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December 2014						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

**OR CURRENT RESIDENT**