

The Guardian

DECEMBER 2021

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 28

First Sunday of Advent

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5

*Second Sunday of Advent
St. Nicholas Fair
after 10:15 service*

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 11

*The Greening of the Church,
9:00 am*

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12

*Third Sunday of Advent
Advent Lessons and Carols,
4:00 pm*

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 19

*Fourth Sunday of Advent
The Longest Night Service,
4:00 pm*



FRIDAY, DECEMBER 24

*Christmas Pageant
and Holy Eucharist,
4:00 pm*

*Festival Candlelight
Christmas Eve Service
with Holy Eucharist,
8:00 pm*

CHRISTMAS DAY, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 25

*Simple Christmas Day Service,
10:00 am*

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26

*Christmas Lessons and Carols
(no Eucharist),
10:15 am
No 8 am Service*

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ADVENT & CHRISTMAS

A SIMPLER, MORE IMPROVISATIONAL ADVENT & CHRISTMAS SEASON

As you can see from the Advent & Christmas schedule on the cover, we are planning a full schedule of our traditional events for Advent and Christmas. However, these events do not represent a return to pre-pandemic normal, but rather they reflect a simpler, more improvisational and safer Advent and Christmas season. We also must note that we may need to change how we do things at the last minute (we are used to this now, no?), so please pay attention to your weekly eNews, which will give you the most up-to-date news of the parish. If you are not subscribed to St. Michael's eNews, you may subscribe on our website, www.stmichaelsvermont.org, or by calling the church office at 802-254-6048, ext 104.

Advent & Christmas Worship — We will continue to offer in-person (masked and social distanced) worship at 8 am and both in-person and livestreamed worship at 10:15 am.

The St. Nicholas Day Fair, December 5, after the 10:15 service — We will offer Advent Swag Making in the Undercroft with a visit from St. Nicholas and food & treats outside on the Playground. With one craft activity rather than the many of past years, we will be able to spread out in the spacious Undercroft. Eating and drinking will be outside only! We invite the congregation to bring edible treats to be shared.

The Greening of the Church, December 11, 9 am — St. Michael's sanctuary is in its glory when dressed in greens! We will meet on Saturday morning to decorate the church. Probably we will have fewer greens this year, but it will still be beautiful. All are welcome to help with the decoration.

Advent Lessons and Carols, December 12, 4 pm — St. Michael's choir is preparing for this wonderful event of song and word. We will be livestreaming this event, so you can come and enjoy it in-person or from the comfort and safety of your home.

The Longest Night Service, December 19, 4 pm — This service will also be available as an in-person event and a livestream option.

Christmas Eve Service with Christmas Pageant, Friday, December 24, 4 pm — We will be pre-filming the Christmas Pageant portion of the Christmas Eve service this year, which will give families and parishioners the option to come to the church to watch the pageant on the screen and in the midst of Christmas Eve worship, or to participate from home through the Livestream. Either way, we will still have our candlelight singing of Silent Night!

Festival Christmas Eve Service, Friday, December 24, 8 pm — All the carols and lessons and candlelight of years past, minus the incense this year. You may participate in person or by Livestream.

Christmas Day, Saturday, December 25 at 10 am — Having Christmas fall on a Saturday means we are in church for three days in a row this year! So, for Christmas Day, we will have an informal in-person service only at the church. We will sing our carols a cappella, share reflection on the mystery of Christmas, and participate in a simple Eucharist.

Sunday, December 26, Christmas Lessons and Carols — We will have ONE SERVICE this day at 10:15, which will be a service of Christmas Lessons and Carols (no sermon, no Eucharist). This service will be available in-person or Livestreamed.

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BECOMING BELOVED COMMUNITY

On Christ the King Sunday, November 21, we began our intentional focus on **Becoming Beloved Community**. This initiative is an intentional focus in the Episcopal Church at the moment to understand and heal our own complicity in racial injustice. It is also a bold intention to cast a new vision of racial healing and conciliation that we can embrace throughout our churches with joy, confidence, and courage.

The language of Beloved Community has roots at least as far as the 1800s but was popularized through the civil rights movement by the work of Martin Luther King, Jr. The King Center notes that for Dr. King, *"Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood. In the Beloved Community, international disputes will be resolved by peaceful conflict-resolution and reconciliation of adversaries, instead of military power. Love and trust will triumph over fear and hatred."*

King himself said that the goal of the civil rights work he led was not just justice but *"the end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the Beloved Community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opponents into friends. It is this type of understanding goodwill that will transform the deep gloom of the old age into the exuberant gladness of the new age. It is this love which will bring about miracles in the hearts of men."* Likewise, the Becoming Beloved Community (BBC) initiative is not primarily about guilt or shame, though we do confront these emotions on our way to fuller reconciliation,



transformation, and 'miracles in the hearts of all.' The BBC initiative takes seriously that the story of our faith is the story of our world. It asks us who follow a crucified God to explore what "power does to 'not power'" and how it often pulls us into the process.

The Advent Devotional, available now, is a collection of poetry, prose and prayers intended to open us spiritually to the work that lies ahead. The Devotional is meant for your personal use, but we will also be reflecting on these readings at our Adult

Forums during the first three Sundays in Advent on Nov. 28, Dec. 5 and Dec. 12. You may pick up your free Devotional at church on Sundays or during the week from 8 am–1 pm, Tuesday-Friday. If you live at a distance, we would be happy to send you a Devotional. Please just let us know by contacting the Church office at Jeanie@stmichaelsvermont.org or 802-254-6048, ext 104.

Some have already asked what they can read to begin to engage. A few options are suggested here for those who want to engage their own personal growth in this work.

- We hope to read *Church Cracked Open* by Stephanie Spellers as a church in the new year. This book explores the role of the Church in racial dynamics in this country, as well as steps that those of us with privilege can take, in the way of Jesus, to be part of the movement for change.
- Some of us have also found *My Grandmother's Hands*, by Resmaa Menakem, to be a useful book. It is not primarily focused on the church.

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However, it does an excellent job of explaining how we have *all* been harmed by this legacy of race. It demonstrates why the body and heart must be as involved as the mind and learning in this work of societal transformation. It also provides body and meditation exercises to facilitate that work.

- Many who were involved in the diocesan study of Bishop Hopkins found a book co-authored by Indigenous Christian theologian Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah on the doctrine of discovery to be very helpful. It is entitled *Unsettling Truths*. However, an accessible primer may be found on Youtube as “Race, Trauma, and the Doctrine of Discovery.”
- Finally, please note that we will read Bishop Hopkins’ 1861 pamphlet on slavery together as a church. Though his 1864 book was read by the diocese, we want to be clear that while he catapulted into this work, he is not, for us, its center. We have chosen his shorter work as characteristic of this thinking. Both the

pamphlet and book are available for free by googling online.

Most especially this initiative will bear the most fruit if we are able to trust each other with our own stories and thoughts and to learn how to be ‘called out and called in’ in a spirit of love, community and growth. Those who don’t want to read can prepare by the simple act of prayer and reflection of the family stories you know. Where have you felt included or excluded on any systemic issue? What are your immigration stories? Where do you become uncomfortable or defensive around these issues? Where do you feel alive and energized? What kind of community do you think a vibrant Beloved Community could look like? What would you choose to do with Bishop Hopkins’ picture if it were up to you? Why? These are the questions that will bring us into our own fertile ground of discovery and growth!

If you would like to be a part of leadership in the endeavor in any way, please reach out to Mary (mary@stmichaelsvermont.org) or adwoa (adwoa@stmichaelsvermont.org).



All Saints Feast Day

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**ADVENT GREENS &
CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS**

If you would like to contribute to the Advent Greens and Christmas Poinsettias at St. Michael's, please fill out the forms available in the back of the Church or in the Common Room and attach your check or cash.

You can also send a check to the office with a note or call (802-254-6048, ext 104) telling us if the contribution is

- "To the Glory of God,"
- in honor of someone, or
- in memory of someone.

If the contribution is in honor or in memory of someone, please send the appropriate names.

**STEWARDSHIP UPDATE**

Many thanks to everyone who has made a pledge in support of St. Michael's ministry and mission for 2022. As of November 15, we have received 100 pledge cards for a total of \$203, 213! We are well on our way toward our goals for pledges received (130) and total pledged (\$280,000). If you have not had a chance to pledge, we encourage you to do so soon. Pledge cards may be returned in the offering plate on Sundays, mailed to St. Michael's or made through St. Michael's website under "giving." If you have not received a pledge card, you can pick one up in the back of the church or the Common Room, or we can send one to you. Many thanks for your great generosity and support!

**HOLY COMMUNION TO GO?**

Are you worshiping from home for Advent and Christmas? Would you like to share in the Holy Communion from home? We can provide you little goblets of consecrated Holy Communion like those we had last year. If you are interested, please let us know when you'd like to pick them up or if you live at a

distance, we can mail them to you. Please contact the Church office, jeanie@stmichaelsvermont.org or 802-354-6048, ext 104.

**THE GREENING OF THE CHURCH,
DECEMBER 11**

All are invited to the greening of the church on Saturday, December 11 at 9 am. This is a festive time when parishioners of all ages are invited to adorn the church with greens and decorate the Christmas tree. Please join us for this festive morning!

**A JOYFUL RETURN!
LESSONS & CAROLS, DECEMBER 12, 4 PM**

Lessons & Carols is one of those services that really signals the season, and it is such a blessing that we are able to be together in person for this beautiful event. With our church freshly greened and the light dimming, we light the candles and sing of the miracle of healing and grace that is found in the coming of an infant. "For unto us a child is given: wonderful, counsellor, Prince of Peace." Join the St. Michael's choir in singing the hymns of the season, hear the words of mystery and power from the scripture, be bathed in the beauty of music — and let your hearts be filled! For those who can't make it or are uncomfortable being in Church at this time, we will be live-streaming this event.

**THE CHRISTMAS PAGEANT**

Remember last year, when we asked parents to film their kids from home and then put those films together into a Zoom film? We are doing something similar this year, but we are asking kids to come to the church on Sunday, December 19 at 12 pm so that we can film everyone's part at one time. We hope to film outside, weather-permitting. If not, we will film inside the church with masks. We also hope to have a rehearsal before December 19, but we need to know

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who is interested in participating first! Once we have a list of cast members, we will organize the parts.

Paul and Susan Dedell will be creating the script and directing the pageant this year. Galen, our BCTV & Livestream film guy, will be doing the filming. Please contact Susan Dedell at dedellsusan@gmail.com or Mary Lindquist at mary@stmichaelsvermont.org if your child/youth is interested in participating!

The advantage of pre-filming the pageant is that we can gather kids in the safest way possible AND families will have the choice of whether to come to the service on Christmas Eve and view the film or to participate in viewing the service and pageant from home.

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**THE LONGEST NIGHT:
A SERVICE OF HOPE FOR ALL
WHO CARRY SORROW OF ANY KIND**

Sunday, December 19, 4:00 pm at St. Michael's

You can come to the service in-person wearing a mask or join the service by Vimeo link. The link to the Vimeo service will be available on the website, www.stmichaelsvermont.org, under "Sunday Morning" and in the eNews.

If you will be following the service on Vimeo, you may have a candle lit during the service in the name of a loved one or a painful situation you are living with. Decide what you would like the leader of the service to say as the candle is lit. Email your request ahead of time to Phillip Wilson, one of the leaders, at 105pdwshw@gmail.com. Your name would not be given, just your dedication of the candle.

Examples: I light this candle in the name of.....

The holiday season magnifies whatever is going on in our lives, the joyful and the hurting places. It can be the hardest time of the year. Carrying sadness, pain or loss is an added struggle when joy and celebration are expected. With candles, readings, music of the cello



and chants, we look for hope and connection as we head into the Christmas holidays.

In past years these are some comments made by people after leaving the Longest Night Service.

"I so wanted a place to quietly cry in Church this Christmas season."

"After naming my loss in such a quiet, sacred way, I now think I can enjoy the good parts of Christmas more."

"It was place where I could be both sad and happy at the same time. Thank you for letting me name the 'sad.'"

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YEAR-END GIVING

As you think about your year-end giving, you might consider a gift to St. Michael's Church that goes beyond your stewardship commitment. As you know, given our frugal budget, there are many needs among our ministries. And while a gift of cash is always wonderful, if you have benefitted from the high stock market this year, please remember that a gift of appreciated stock gives you a tax deduction at the market value and no capital gains tax due. Also, you can save on taxes by making a gift from your retirement account if you have a required minimum distribution to withdraw by year-end. And finally, although we have not launched our Roof/Renewable Energy campaign yet, the account has been established and we would welcome any early gifts to help us get started. Thank you for your generosity!

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WHEN I WAS A STRANGER YOU WELCOMED ME

*An Update from the St. Michael's Interfaith Refugee Resettlement Ministry**by Christopher Wesolowski*

As we approach the Advent and Christmas season, we will be hearing stories of people seeking shelter and fleeing danger. These stories primarily involve the Holy family. As the St. Michael's Interfaith Refugee Resettlement Ministry readies itself to welcome new neighbors from Afghanistan, I hope that the stories we have heard and celebrated for most of our faith lives will take on a new and deeper dimension as the Ministry seeks support in settling them in our community. As Jean Smith so beautifully shared in her story of being a foreigner in Japan, I believe we all have stories of journey, struggle and travel — some not long ago and others generations in the past.

The Core Team continues to meet and interface with ECDC, BDCC and CASP as co-sponsors. The “nesting” portion of the Ministry is gathering supplies to set up complete households for 2 to 3 families. People from St. Michael's have been exceptionally generous with donations and keep donating many vital household items. Along with the initial nesting aspects,

the Ministry will be supporting the Afghan families for the long haul as they make their transition to a new life in Vermont. In early December, the Core Team will be receiving refugee management and support-specific training from ECDC that will supplement the Team's already remarkable knowledge base.

The long haul is where you, the kind and welcoming community of St. Michael's, will be needed. There will be a myriad of things to do, some at the spur of the moment, to help support the families in their transition and getting settled. Some of these are known and some others will emerge as the need arises. We expect to expand our support in those numerous ways with the generous time and talent from you our beloved community. We will be keeping you in the loop through all our wonderful means of communication and hope you will share in this deeply important work.

As Daniel Dobson has said, this is a gift that has been given to us and our response is a joy-filled and grateful “Yes!”

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Many thanks to the Holy Mayhem group for raking the leaves on my lawn and driveway! The kids (and their adult leaders) were efficient and energetic, and my yard now looks beautiful. We are so lucky to have such dedicated, friendly parishioners who give their time in service to their neighbors!

Thanks much, Valerie Abrahamsen

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HOT OFF THE PRESSES! A ROOF & SOLAR UPDATE

By Mary Lindquist

As I mentioned in our last newsletter, one of St. Michael's three big initiatives in 2022 is moving forward in our longtime dream of replacing the sanctuary roof and installing solar panels. There are many moving parts to this project, but we want to share with you where we are with the project currently.

Solar/Renewable Energy

While researching different options for solar energy, we have learned more about the wide array of approaches for attaining a clean energy future. St. Michael's interest in solar panels began with "dream-catching" way back in 2008 when we wanted to do our part to address the climate crisis of our planet and to take seriously our call to be good stewards of the earth that God has made. The need for churches, indeed all institutions, to attain a clean energy future that is free of fossil fuels and reduces greenhouse gas emissions is increasingly important. As faith leaders around the world, including our own Diocese, step up to meet this urgency as a core part of our missions, St. Michael's hears the call and wants to respond as a community leader.

We are now gathering information about reducing the Church's carbon footprint and all the possibilities of developing a "total energy management approach" that includes ramping up energy efficiency and other ways of reducing our energy needs, such as exploring installation of cost-efficient and energy-efficient mini-split heating and cooling systems and having the possibility for energy independence through installation of batteries (e.g., Tesla Power Walls) that can store the electricity generated from solar panels installed at the church. Once we have a good sense of what may be possible for us and what we can afford, we will share our findings with the congregation and listen to your feedback before deciding how we want to move forward. The renewable energy project would begin after the replacement of the roof and the completion of a capital campaign.

The Roof

At our meeting on November 18, the Vestry voted to hire Phoenix Roofing to replace the sanctuary roof and Farnum Insulators to provide insulation during the summer of 2022. The slate roof will be replaced with a standing-seam copper roof. Our beautiful slate roof has been leaking for years. We have patched the roof many times over the years, but we cannot seem to stay ahead of the leaking, which continues despite our best efforts. In addition, the slate, while beautiful, is very heavy for our 1850s structure. St. Michael's has been discussing the replacement of the roof for years; indeed, we almost signed a contract in 2019, before reconsidering the installation of insulation. We have decided that we do need insulation which will help reduce our heating needs and help keep the sanctuary cooler in the summer. We are fortunate to have a patient, wise and local company with an excellent reputation, Phoenix Roofing, which is willing to take this project next summer.

Given the pitch of the roof and the need for snow not to gather and add weight to the structure, a standing-seam roof was recommended as the best option. The main choice for the Vestry then was to decide between steel and copper. Copper, while more expensive, was recommended by Eli Phoenix because steel roofs need to be repainted and repaired after 35 years, while a copper roof will last without maintenance for as long as 150 years! Also, we already have copper as part of our roof and elevator shaft structure. Going with steel would mean removing all the copper that is currently part of the building. Many of us will not be here in 35 years and none of us will be here in 150 years, but the investment in copper seemed like the wisest choice and the best gift to those who come after us.

St. Michael's has saved enough to pay for half of the new roof cost. We are planning a capital campaign in 2022 that we hope will cover the other half of the roof cost, plus the cost of our renewable energy plan.

Continued

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Because the capital campaign will probably not be completed before the roof replacement, the Vestry is looking into other options for funding. The Vestry also considered the option of waiting until 2023, after we hope to complete our fundraising, to replace the roof. Since we have put off the roof replacement for so long and the roof continues to leak, the Vestry decided to go ahead with this project for 2022.

The Capital Campaign

Once we figure out the scope of the entire project including the roof and the renewable energy options, we will begin the first stages of the capital campaign. We have begun to assemble the core committees to help us with these important projects. The Roof/Energy Committee is currently composed of Alan McBean, Vince Johnson, Steven Meyer and Cary Gaunt. The Capital Campaign Committee core group made up of Chris Hart and Judith McBean as co-chairs and Christopher Chapman is already meeting and anticipates inviting more people into this process in 2022.

Why the building?

We are assuming in all of this that the building is important to our mission and ministry. It is true that churches are closing every day; it is also true that churches are deciding that they don't need a building to do their ministry. So why invest so much in the building?

This is a good question worth pondering. When I came to Brattleboro from Hawaii to interview for the position as rector, I met with your interim rector, Merritt Greenwood. He spoke about how much use the building got throughout the week. I remember him saying, "I tell the parishioners that the building needs a rest sometimes...."

Our building, in the pre-pandemic time, was very well used. We opened our doors to three different 12-step groups, the Inclusion Center used the Undercroft twice a week, and we hosted elder luncheons, tag sales, discipleship groups, Hospice, concerts, rug-makers, Tai Chi, yoga, Choir School, multiple meetings and prayer groups, and the Horizon Preschool, to name just a few.

Now, even in the midst of the pandemic, many of these groups have started meeting again.

The building provides shelter for us to learn, pray, share and grow that we may be nourished and supported in our lives as followers of Jesus. It is where we gather together to celebrate many of the most important traditions of our faith — baptism, marriage, funerals, Christmas and Holy Week — and where we come together as a whole to celebrate, to mourn and to discern God's call to us.

The building also allows us to offer hospitality to our neighbors in the wider community and to support the good works that benefit all around us. We intend to continue to offer this shelter and this hospitality for generations to come while inspiring others to invest in solar and renewable energy.

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OUT OF THE ASH

*Solstice of the dark, the absolute
Zero of the year. Praise God
Who comes for us again, our lives
Pulled to their fisted knot,
Cinched tight with cold, drawn
To the heart's constriction; our faces
Seamed like clinkers in the grate,
Hands like tongs — Praise God
That Christ, phoenix immortal,
Springs up again from solstice ash,
Drives his equatorial ray
Into our cloud, emblazons
Our stiff brow, fries
Our chill tears. Come Christ,
Most gentle and throat-pulsing Bird!
O come, sweet Child! Be gladness
In our church! Waken with anthems
Our bare rafters! Oh phoenix
Forever! virgin-wombed
And burning in the dark,
Be born! Be born!*

from The Crooked Lines of God by Brother Antoninus

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SUMMARY OF NOVEMBER MEETING OF THE VESTRY

The Vestry gathered over Zoom November 18, 2021 with all members present.

We began our time together with prayer and a brief time of sharing some of our favorite Thanksgiving memories.

Next, we were given an encouraging financial report for October from our treasurer, Bruce Lawrence. He also told us that he is working to gather an advisory team to work on the upcoming annual budget. The findings from the 2020 internal audit were approved. He informed us that we also have funds to initiate a soft-audit from an outside perspective and recommended we explore doing that in the future.

Nancy Ames kept us abreast of the Beloved Community developments, including a new book study and Advent offerings. Mary also told us of other Advent activities that will be happening this year either in-person or in a hybrid format, including St. Nicholas Day and the Christmas pageant.

Ricky discussed reaching out for new vestry members as the year comes to a close, and then we had further discussion on the roof project, making progress towards a final decision about the details of moving the project forward in the coming year. Mary also updated us about the Zoom convention and her involvement with THRIVE. She announced that Carol Hesselbach was elected to Diocesan Council.

Finally, Steve shared his gratitude for the stewardship committee's work. Nancy also let us know about plans to write articles about the Social Justice Book Group for the diocese and local publications.

Judy closed us in prayer after we expressed thanks for the Building and Grounds Committee who have helped this month with projects around the church.

—submitted by Christy Fritz

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Buildings and Grounds Workday

EXPLORING OUR FAITH TOGETHER

LECTIONARY FOR DECEMBER

Sunday, December 5: Baruch 5:1–9 or Malachi 3:1–4, Canticle 4 or 16, Philippians 1:3–1, Luke 3:1–6

Sunday, December 12: Zephaniah 3:14–20, Canticle 9, Philippians 4:4–7, Luke 3:7–18

Sunday, December 19: Micah 5:2–5a, Canticle 15 (or 3) or Psalm 80:1–7, Hebrews 10:5–10, Luke 1:39–45, (46–55)

Sunday, December 26: Isaiah 61:10–62:3, Psalm 147, Galatians 3:23–25, 4:4–7; John 1:1–18

DECEMBER 2021 CELEBRATIONS

BIRTHDAYS

December 1	Liz Vick, Cindy Bacigalupo
December 3	Jonah Siegel
December 6	Ramon Escalera Jr.
December 7	Chris Mattson
December 8	Julia Fedoruk, Paul Dyer
December 9	Jeanette Perry
December 10	Clara Fritz, Gigi Birri
December 11	Wylene Wood
December 12	Jenny Karstad, Hailey Cogliano, Rebecca Mayer
December 14	Robin White-Diamondstone
December 15	Carol Hesselbach
December 17	Julie Ackerman-Hovis, Jessica Bennett
December 20	Merribelle Coles, Annabel Horton
December 22	Susan Avery, Ann Bonneville, Daniel Dobson
December 23	Jean Smith
December 25	Joyce Vining Morgan
December 26	Jeanette Landin, Hugo Taggart, Susan Ruggles
December 28	MJ Woodburn, Christine Gauthier, Stephanie Diamondstone
December 30	Annamarie Pluhar, Laurel Harrison

ANNIVERSARIES

December 5	Brian & Joyce Vining Morgan
December 7	Michael & Susan Wilmott
December 21	Lucia Osiecki & Deb Jones
December 27	Bruce & Kerry Capponcelli
December 30	George Moore & Margery McCrum

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The Guardian

a Christ-centered community of practice awakening to the abiding presence of God



OUR WORSHIP TOGETHER IN PERSON & ONLINE

SUNDAYS	8:00 am	Quiet service of prayer and Eucharist
	10:15 am	Prayer, music and Eucharist.
WEDNESDAYS	12:00 pm	30-minute service of scripture, prayer and Holy Communion
WEEKDAY MORNINGS	8:00 am	Morning Prayer
THURSDAYS	5:30–6:00 pm	Contemplative service of chanting, silence, and prayer