

The Guardian

DECEMBER 2023

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3

First Sunday of Advent
St. Nicholas Fair

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9, 9–10 AM

The Greening of the Church

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10

Second Sunday of Advent
Advent Lessons & Carols, 4 pm

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18

Third Sunday of Advent



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24

Fourth Sunday of Advent
(Morning Services)
Christmas Eve

- Christmas Pageant and Holy Eucharist, 4 pm
- Festival Candlelight Christmas Eve Service with Holy Eucharist, 8 pm

MONDAY, DECEMBER 25

Christmas Day Service, 10 am

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31

Holy Eucharist, 8 am
Christmas Lessons & Carols
(no Eucharist), 10:15 am

ADVENT 4 AND CHRISTMAS EVE ARE ON THE SAME DAY THIS YEAR!

Ah, the adventure of Christmas moving around the week each year. Please note that this year, the fourth Sunday of Advent is the same day as Christmas Eve. That means we will have a very short Advent season (boo!!!) and we will celebrate Advent and Christmas on the same day (Advent in the morning and Christmas in the evening).

FROM THE RECTORY

ADVENT — HOLDING BOTH HEARTBREAK AND JOY

Last night during our November Vestry Meeting, Sr. Warden Annie Landenberger posed a question: How do we hold the paradox of heartbreak and joy at the same time? We always begin our Vestry meetings with a time of reflection and conversation, and this reflection question was a particularly potent one. Annie told of the challenge of holding her excitement and joy over a new grandchild who is to be born soon with the feeling of sadness and heartbreak over the state of the world. While we did not find a way to resolve this paradox, it occurred to me today that these two feelings are at the heart of our Season of Advent.

Culturally, the Season of Advent is all joy, happiness and excitement, but within the Christian tradition Advent is a time both of waking up to the heartbreaking realities of our world and a time of deep longing for the joy of salvation.

O come, O come, Emmanuel

And ransom captive Israel,

That mourns in lonely exile here,

Until the Son of God appear.

Part of the call of Advent is to lean into the passion of longing, holding grief and joy together at the same time.

Sometimes the grief we hold during this time is very personal. Recently, Jean Smith met with me to tell me that she and Peter would be moving to a continuing care facility in Connecticut. I was so surprised and saddened by this news. I have worked with Jean for the last twelve years here at St. Michael's and Jean has been at the heart of St. Michael's ministry for sixteen years! It is painful to say goodbye. And yet, as I mentioned at our Pastoral Care Team meeting last week, being a member of a church gives us all a real education in grief. We grow close to one another and inevitably every year, we have to say goodbye to a few of the folks we have grown to love.

At the same time, we have the joy of welcoming new people into our community and living this life of faith together. Life in an intergenerational community is ever-changing and it is a real education of the heart.

May the Season of Advent help us to live into the paradoxes of our lives, our longing, our hopes, our grief and our joy.

Mary
Mary Lindquist
Rector

NEWS OF THE PARISH

**SAVE THE DATE! FEBRUARY 11!
GIVING THANKS FOR JEAN SMITH'S
MINISTRY AT ST. MICHAEL'S**

Our beloved Priest Associate, Jean Smith, and her husband Peter, will be moving to a continuing care facility in Connecticut in the middle of February. Jean has served St. Michael's for sixteen years and her ministry with us has been so profound. Please mark your calendar for a special in-between the services Coffee Hour on Sunday, February 11, when we will gather to give thanks for her tremendous ministry at St. Michael's.



**ADULT FORUMS IN ADVENT:
CALLED TO WONDER**

This Advent we will be gathering to explore and wonder together about some of the stories of Advent and Christmas for our Adult Forums from 9–10 am in the Meeting Room. We will be looking at these stories through the lens of icons, especially the work of Ivanka Demchuk (on December 3 & 17), a young, contemporary Ukrainian artist.

- December 3 — “The Story and Images of the Annunciation,” led by Mary Lindquist
- December 10 — “The Story and Images of Joseph,” led by Phillip Wilson
- December 17 — “The Story and Images of Christmas,” led by Mary Lindquist
- December 24 & 31 — No Forum on these days!



STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

Many thanks to everyone who has made a pledge in support of St. Michael's ministry and mission for 2024. As of November 17, we have received 100 pledge cards for a total of \$214, 868, with 54% of pledges increased

from the previous year. We are well on our way toward our goals for pledges received (140) and total pledged (\$322,000). 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!



**CALLING ALL KIDS AND TEENS
FOR THE CHRISTMAS EVE PAGEANT!!**

Calling toddlers, children and teens! Join St. Michael's Christmas Eve pageant and help bring the Nativity to life for our parish! We've been doing our own Vermont Nativity for several years now and will continue to do so, modifying to fit the company and adding any new elements that pageanteers invent. We'll gather first on November 26 right after church in the Undercroft to go over the pageant plan and to hear who'd like to be involved and in what role. If you can't make it to that brief round-up, no worries: kids can sign up by email — info to follow. We'll then rehearse Sunday mornings December 3, 10, 17 from 9–10 am AND Saturday, December 23 in the afternoon. The pageant is December 24 at 4:00 p.m. We invite youth from outside the Parish to join in, too. Kids: if you have friends from school or the neighborhood who'd like to be part of the pageantry, please encourage them to join us. We welcome — and are grateful to — the Youth Group as key players in the pageant this year. For more information, contact Annie Landenberger, 802-348-7156, verbatimvt@gmail.com. Watch for more information and a list of other adult contacts in upcoming Sunday Bulletins.

—Annie Landenberger, Lydia Taggart, Miranda Smith



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**ST. NICHOLAS DAY FAIR, DECEMBER 3
FOLLOWING 10:15 SERVICE**

The St. Nicholas Day Fair is one of the most joyful and fun events of our church year! There is food, Christmas craft-making for all ages, and a visit from St. Nicholas himself. Did you know that Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, c.342, was generous to seafarers and to sailors, and more especially to children? Please join us for this special event immediately following the 10:15 am service on December 3.

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**THE GREENING OF THE CHURCH,
SATURDAY DECEMBER 9
9–10 AM**

All are invited to the greening of the church on Saturday, December 9 from 9–10 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 gathering!

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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.

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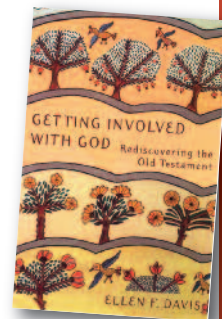
**ADVENT LESSONS & CAROLS
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10, 4 PM**

We invite you to this year's Service of Lessons and Carols which will take place on Sunday, Dec. 10, at 4pm. In addition to the singing of Advent carols with the congregation, the St. Michael's choir will be singing a diverse set of old and new Advent anthems by Victoria, Rutter, Skempton, Vaughan Williams, and Lauridsen. Come join in this yearly tradition of scripture and music as we look forward to celebrating the birth of Christ.

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**EXPLORING THE PSALMS
DECEMBER 7–JANUARY 11**

The Psalms are a beautiful, disturbing, mysterious, and all together relatable collection of poems at the heart of both Jewish and Christian devotion. The book of Psalms is also the only book of Scripture that we read every single time we gather for Eucharist or daily prayer.



Here at St. Michael's we've been on our own journey with the Psalms. Mary offered a preaching series in 2022 about the different types. Adwoa has been facilitating a psalm study at The Works for the past year.

This Advent and Christmas season, Rev. adwoa will be bringing this opportunity to explore the psalms to the wider diocese through the Green Mountain Online Abbey. Using the book *Getting Involved with God*, the formation program will explore the gift of the Psalms for prayer, personal devotion, and community connection.

All are welcome to join us. While RSVP and regular participation are encouraged, they are not required. The book can be purchased at various distributors. Questions/RSVPs can be directed to adwoa at adwoa@stmichaelsvermont.org.

Dates: December 7, 14, 21, and 28. January 4 and 11, 6:00–7:50 pm, followed by Compline with the Green Mountain Online Abbey at 8:00.

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BUILDING HOPE PROJECT UPDATE

We had a beautiful celebration of our Building Hope for the Earth project on Sunday, October 29. It was so inspiring to stop, reflect, and give thanks for all that has been done in such a short time!

Many thanks to our speakers: Chris Hart, Judith McBean, Jon Davis and Cary Gaunt. Many thanks to those who planned, organized and helped put together such a beautiful event with such delicious food: Judith McBean, Chris Hart, Alan McBean, Cary Gaunt and the many people who came to help on Saturday, October 28.

Norwich Solar has begun to install our solar panels, which is so very exciting! The panels should be completed in the next couple of weeks.

Building Hope Celebration

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**AGING: IT'S NOT WHAT I EXPECTED
A SHARED DISCUSSION***Jeff Lewis*

As I grow older I find that more and more of my conversations revolve around aging. This has been a bit of a surprise as I've always been busy doing something, usually trying to help people accomplish something. Now my thoughts are often not directed by goals, projects or outcomes but by the questions that float up from times past. Some are troubling, some are pleasing, most are worth reflecting on.

I'd like to create a group of 6 to 8 to have an eight-week discussion group on aging. I'll provide some guidelines; we'll just see where it goes. We will read a chapter of Joan Chittister's book, "The Gift of Years," for each week to set the topic. We'll meet weekly for 8 weeks in the Church Meeting Room on Wednesdays from 10 to 11:15, beginning on January 3rd.

Please contact Jeff Lewis at Jeffrey.m.lewis@comcast.net, 802-579-3877 if you are interested.



*"How can we live with ourselves
if our neighbors are living with hunger?"*

**PROJECT FEED RUNS
THROUGH DECEMBER 31***Ruth Tilghman*

Hunger has become an epidemic. Our friends and neighbors are having an increasingly difficult time putting healthy, nutritious meals on the table. Often hidden, hunger affects countless individuals and families in our community. In fact, there are over 6000 people in our area that regularly use a food shelf or community kitchen. These individuals include senior citizens, veterans, refugees and working families with children who do not earn enough to make ends meet. Project Feed the Thousands' mission is to address this epidemic.

Everyone can help. Project Feed the Thousands is unique in that EVERYONE can participate in some way.

Whether you choose to make a cash contribution or pick up an extra non-perishable food item every time you go grocery shopping, YOU are helping YOUR friends and neighbors fill a critical gap — the need for the most basic of human needs — FOOD!!

How St Michael's people can help:

Everything people at St Michael's donate in the name of Project Feed goes directly to Loaves and Fishes. These are put into family grocery bags and boxes of food delivered to people at Dalem Chalet and the housing projects. We were also able to set up a market for our Afghan Refugees. Some of the food is directly cooked into meals which we served to the homeless, hotel population, and home bound people. Donations of money gave us the ability to purchase more food from the Food Bank, wholesale, and local farms.

What we need:

Pam Carr and Teri Robinson who faithfully package up to 46 bags of staples twice a week have a list of needed items:

- Canned goods especially with pop top lids: baked beans, beans, canned chicken, tuna fish, deviled ham, hash, fruits, and vegetables, spaghetti sauce
- Dry goods: crackers, individual packets of rice and mashed potatoes, mac and cheese, pasta meals
- Afghan and other refugee food needs: rice, red beans, garbanzo beans, flour, oil, yeast, sugar

How to donate to Loaves and Fishes?

There is a red basket in the Sanctuary, or people can deliver to Loaves and Fishes, or people can directly order from Amazon and have food delivered to Loaves and Fishes at Centre Church, 193 Main St, Brattleboro VT 05301 Donations of checks can be made out to Loaves and Fishes with Project Feed in the memo line.

With YOUR help we can make a difference in our communities — with dignity, courtesy, and respect for those less fortunate than ourselves.

THANK YOU! Ruth Tilghman –802-258-1765,
rtilgh09@aol.com

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SACRAMENTAL HEALING TEAM AT ST. MICHAEL'S, 1998–2023

Carolyn Taylor-Olson

"Rise and go; your faith has made you well." Luke 17:19

As followers of Christ, we believe that we are called to continue His ministry of healing. This healing takes many forms — physical, spiritual, and emotional — and is an important part of the church's ministry. The Biblical record seems quite clear that a ministry of healing was one of the principal ways the church grew in the first decades and centuries of the church.

While healing was a big draw for the early church, as advances in science and medicine advanced, it drew people away from spiritual healing. The Episcopal Church applies the sacramental rites already contained within the BCP but with the new emphasis placed on the healing power of the Holy Spirit.

Healing reconciles people to God. A fundamental reason and hoped for outcome of a healing ministry is that people's lives are changed by a healing of soul and mind, rather than curing of ailments, to facilitate and show concern for spiritual as well as the wellbeing of the whole person with reconciliation of individuals to God.

There are many stories and accounts of healing in the Bible.

Jesus made this promise to his disciples:

"the works that I do, you will do... greater things than these you will do" John 14:12

Instructions to the early church in James 5:13-16:

"Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are you cheerful? They should sing. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord.

The prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another,

pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective."

The Healing Ministry at St Michael's Episcopal Church had its beginnings in the late 1990s with the vision and initiative of Helen and John Daly and the support of our interim Rector Jean Jersey to explore the creation of a healing prayer team. The Healing Team has also benefitted by support from Rev. (now bishop) Thomas Brown, Rev. Jean Smith, and Rev. Duncan Hilton.

We studied and prayed, went on a silent retreat with the brothers at Society of St John the Evangelist, and were commissioned as well as licensed as Lay Preachers by our bishop (Rev Thomas Ely). All who feel called to this ministry go through a period of training and, when ready, are commissioned as healing ministers.

The team of prayer companions from our parish feels called to this ministry in support of those who request prayers of healing for themselves, for others, and in thanksgiving. Everyone who comes for prayers is also anointed with oil that has been blessed by the bishop. The blessed oil is sent to each parish at the end of the Diocesan Convention in November.

The sacrament of healing at our church is scheduled on most Sundays. At the 8 o'clock service it follows the service proper. At the 10:15 o'clock service it is available during communion and after the service proper; all confidential prayers are held in the Chapel. No prayer request is too big or too small. We know it may not always be easy to come forward whether it is for the first time or the one hundredth time

Why do we have this lay ministry, what is it all about for our parish, who prays, when do we pray, and how is this done? You may ask any of the following questions:

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- What's in it for me? The Lord knows what you may need.
- Is healing prayer a cure or a medical intervention? The goal is to be open to a relationship with God and heal spiritually.
- Is it confession? In a confidential space one may ask for forgiveness from God.
- Prayer with another is a time to share a burden, proclaim a joy or seek grace for another. It is a sacred space for giving and receiving the holy spirit in relationship with God. There is reassurance and empowerment in one's faith.

After taking communion or after the dismissal, anyone may come into the chapel and sit or stand with the healing minister. You will be asked if it is okay to lightly touch your shoulder or clasp hands. You may say why you come for prayers or think of it silently. The prayer partner will begin a prayer and after the Amen, you will be anointed on your forehead with the sacred oil. What is prayed for and said in this space is not repeated or revisited outside of this intimate prayer time.

Come, share your burdens and joys with your parish family and feel the strength of the Holy Spirit surround you.

Past and present team members:

Helen Daly, John Daly, Deborah Leggott, Martin Leggott, Devin Starlenyl, Trudi Crites, MJ Woodburn, Carolyn Taylor-Olson, Connie McGinn, Janet Cramer, Betsy Bates, Martha Black, Robin White-Diamondstone, Sarah Benton, Megan Buchanan, Jeff Lewis, Greg Lesch, Judith Hildreth Junkins, Margit Lilly, and Matthew Bickford.



ST. MICHAEL'S REFUGEE MINISTRY UPDATE

Since we began this work in early 2022 we have received and co-sponsored 5 families, totaling 28 people, about a third of the wave of Afghans. We have also materially supported another 6 families. All of our families are now on a path to stability with apartments and jobs, with children in school and plans for the future. Nearly everyone also has family in Afghanistan that they want to reunite with, so that work is not finished. And other refugees are now arriving in Brattleboro from other countries. There are about 70 currently in residence at SIT, the interim housing stop.

The Ministry itself, led for nearly two years by Jean Smith and Jeff Lewis along with Daniel Dobson and Nancy Ames, has been focused on sustainability. We formed an Advisory Committee nearly a year ago to examine mission and performance and to lay out plans for 'The Way Forward.' That committee, led by Paul Gallagher with Christopher Wesolowski, Steven Guerriero, Robin Manning, Elizabeth Fisher, Jean and Jeff (with the early help of Chris Hart), has finished its work. The new leaders of the Ministry will be Elizabeth, Paul and Robin, with the Advisory Committee supporting them.

The new leaders are directly engaged with ECDC, our refugee placement partner, about how co-sponsorship can work best here in Brattleboro. Assuming a successful resolution of those discussions we expect to take on up to two families a year.

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SUMMARY OF NOVEMBER MEETING OF THE VESTRY

Your Vestry gathered Thursday evening, November 16, in St. Michael's now warm and cozy meeting room. With the recently installed energy efficient min-split quietly whirring in the background and dramatically improved insulation keeping warm air in and cold drafts out, we appreciated the gifts of comfort provided by the *Building Hope for the Earth* project and the generosity of our church family.

Our meeting started with an engaging and educational presentation by Robin Rieske, Certified Substance Prevention Specialist in Brattleboro. Robin provided a brief overview of local organizations supporting people affected by substance use and the need in Brattleboro for more locations to offer Narcan Nasal Spray kits. Narcan (Naloxone) is a life-saving medicine that can reverse an opioid overdose. Robin explained how the kits work and instructed the Vestry on how to use them should the need arise. The church plans to have a kit available.

After Robin's presentation, we turned to our devotional time — a critical part of each Vestry meeting. Senior Warden Annie Landenberger led us in a discussion about dichotomy and paradox and how we manage the seeming contradictions that confront us daily in our faith. She invited us to reflect on what it means to acknowledge the despair we feel with current global conditions and challenges, while at the same time feeling hope, excitement, and gratitude for the many blessings of our lives. She quoted from wisdom teacher Richard Rohr words that are worth considering: "Hold these paradoxes in silence and your lived experience. Let them teach you true wisdom and transform you. Holy people live inside of a very creative tension that is held together by grace and compassion, never by logic alone."

Treasurer Tom Cain's report assured us that finances at the church are sound and expenses are occurring as anticipated. Improvements to budget planning and tracking continue to be made and Tom, Mary, and the Vestry are exploring options to make the budget,

especially the day-to-day bookkeeping, even more resilient. Gwen Mousin, who graciously agreed to become Treasurer in January, has begun to work with Tom to learn the systems and get trained.

Mary's report included lots of gratitude for our congregation. Pledges keep coming in with almost 100 received to date. Many of the pledges, 54% to date, have been increased in response to the call to provide more support for a part-time assistant priest, specifically adwoa at this time. It is too soon to tell if we will meet our stated financial goal, but we are making good progress toward it. There is still time to pledge if you haven't done so already!! Every little bit will count towards the goal.

Mary also provided an update on the annual Diocesan Convention that was held in two parts: in-person on November 4th and online November 9th. Much was discussed and resolved. The details can be found at: <https://diovermont.org/diocesan-convention-2023/>

We also received an update on the Building Hope for the Earth project. Phase 1 is almost completed!! Solar panels are installed on the Bradley Wing!! Work placing solar panels on the Sanctuary roof should be completed in a couple weeks. Then we will really be living into our commitment to reduce our carbon footprint as the church begins being powered by solar energy. We collectively shared appreciation and gratitude for all who contributed to the project and especially the successful *Building Hope for the Earth* celebration held Sunday October 29th.

Many of you have noted that trees and shrubs were cut down in front of the Rectory. This was done to enable solar panels to be placed on the Rectory roof as part of the Building Hope project. Alan McBean reported that the Building and Grounds Committee is developing a plan to install fencing and new vegetation to provide privacy for Mary and her family.

Senior Warden Annie asked us to share what we were hearing from you during the Vestry Listening Corner

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at coffee hour. A few parishioners provided comments and suggestions that we discussed. We appreciate parishioners' engagement. Please look for us at coffee hour or send your ideas to us via email. We like hearing from you.

Annie also gave us an update on nominations for new Vestry members that will be voted on at the Annual Meeting. Thank you in advance for being willing to serve! Annie concluded her report by honoring the new Common Room and offering appreciation to all who were involved in creating it! There are a few more

things that need to be done, but we are "92% of the way there!"

The meeting wound down with an open discussion of miscellaneous other topics including an update on St. Michael's Refugee Ministry. Co-Founders and leaders Jean Smith and Jeff Lewis will be stepping down and that leadership will move to a triad of Elizabeth Fisher, Paul Gallagher and Robin Manning. Thank you to all who volunteer for this important ministry.

The meeting concluded with a lovely prayer from Alan McBean.

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On November 5, one of St. Michael's carbon monoxide alarms went off, so everyone was evacuated before the 10:15am service. Fortunately, the firemen found no carbon monoxide in the building, it was a beautiful day and the kids really enjoyed seeing the fire trucks!



The Completed Common Room.



Chris Triebert, Vince Johnson and Alan McBean work on the Common Room Project.

EXPLORING OUR FAITH TOGETHER

LECTIONARY FOR DECEMBER

To see all the readings for each Sunday,
go to <http://www.lectionarypage.net/#december>.
You will find there the collects, lessons and psalms
for each Sunday and feast day.

DECEMBER 2023 CELEBRATIONS

BIRTHDAYS

December 1	Liz Vick, Cindy Bacigalupo
December 3	Jonah Siegel
December 5	Mark Horton
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
December 23	Jean Smith
December 24	Carol Leitch
December 25	Joyce Vining Morgan
December 26	Imogene Drakes, 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

SUNDAYS	8:00 am	Quiet service of prayer and Eucharist
	10:15 am	Prayer, music and Eucharist. (in-person and online)
WEEKDAYS	8:00 am	Morning Prayer (online) and Tues.–Thurs. in Chapel
WEDNESDAYS	11:30 am	Centering Prayer (in-person)
	12:00	Eucharist (in-person)
THURSDAYS	5:30 pm	Contemplative service (in-person and online)
SATURDAYS	8:00 am	Centering Prayer (in-person)