



The Beacon

December 2025

Vol. 41, No. 12

Advent 2025

Each Sunday during Advent, along with the music of the season, we will take up how the story of first coming of Jesus is told by each of the Gospels. What would Christmas look, sound, and feel like if we only had one of these Gospel accounts? When we combine these accounts—as we

usually do in our telling of the Christmas Story—we miss the nuances and uniqueness of each account. Taking them one at a time will call us into a deeper understanding of the meaning of Christmas for our lives.

Advent I-HOPE: November 30

Christmas According to the Gospel of Mark:
“A Concealed Conception”

Advent II-PEACE: December 7

Christmas According to the Gospel of Matthew:
“A Scandalous Conception”

Advent III-JOY: December 14

Christmas According to the Gospel of Luke:
“A Subversive Conception”

Advent IV-LOVE: December 21

Christmas According to the Gospel of John:
“A Cosmic Conception”

Christmas Eve 2025

6:00 p.m. A Family Service of Lessons and Carols

Along with the reading of the Christmas Story, the singing of Carols, and the passing of the light, all children present will be invited to participate in an impromptu Christmas Pageant.

9:00 p.m. A Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols

In the beauty of a candlelit sanctuary, we will read the Christmas Story, sing carols, enjoy special music, and pass the light to one another as we contemplate what it means for the light of Christ to be born anew in our lives.



*From the Interim
Senior Minister's Desk*

Rev. David J. Wood

Advent: Then and Now

In 1985, Neil Postman wrote *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, in which he details the effects Television—and the entertainment culture it was cultivating—was having on everyday life, communication, and meaning. In the opening pages of his book, Postman contrasts the dystopian vision of George Orwell in *1984* with the one imagined by Aldous Huxley in *Brave New World*. Here is what he wrote:

- What Orwell feared were those who would ban books. What Huxley feared was that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one.
- Orwell feared those who would deprive us of information. Huxley feared those who would give us so much that we would be reduced to passivity and egoism.
- Orwell feared that the truth would be concealed from us. Huxley feared the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance.
- Orwell feared we would become a captive culture. Huxley feared we would become a trivial culture, preoccupied with some equivalent of the feelies, the orgy porgy, and the centrifugal bumblepuppy. As Huxley remarked in *Brave New World Revisited*, the civil libertarians and rationalists who are ever on the alert to oppose tyranny "failed to take into account man's almost infinite appetite for distractions." In *1984*, Orwell added, people are controlled by inflicting pain. In *Brave New World*, they are controlled by inflicting pleasure.

- In short, Orwell feared that what we fear will ruin us.
Huxley feared that what we desire will ruin us.

From where I sit, I think Huxley's fear of what might ruin us is more attuned than Orwell to the moment we are living through.

Advent is a time for contemplating how the coming of Christ to the world has changed everything—not just then (in early 1st Century Palestine), but now (in early 21st Century America). In a world that is changing in ways that would have been impossible to imagine in the early 1st Century, our need for the change that God in Christ makes possible remains no less true to and for the moment.

There is much in this moment we are living through that has us yearning for a truth that endures, for a humanity that is humane, for a transcendence that infuses our everyday lives with a purpose and meaning.

Let us not fear what the world is coming to. Instead, let us recall and let us celebrate Who has come to the world...and how that coming makes possible a hope, a faith, and a love that resists the drift envisioned by either Orwell or Huxley.

As we gather on the Eve of Christmas, we will light candles and, as the light is passed among us, we will proclaim the Good News,

“The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1: 5)

Peace,

David J. Wood



DOVE TREE 2025 Donate by Dec. 8th

The Dove Tree season is here! All are invited to donate to the Dove Tree ministry between now and December 8th. Please make checks payable to First Congregational Church with "Dove Tree donation" noted in the memo line. You can mail them to FCC or take them to the

office. Contributions received for this ministry are used to purchase generous grocery store gift cards, which are confidentially distributed to dozens of recipient families within the Camden-Rockport school district (recommended by the school).

Gratefully, Bette McFarland, Elaine Davis and Ursula Crosslin

Ring in the Season
NINETEENTH ANNUAL 'CHRISTMAS BY THE SEA' HOLIDAY HANDBELL CONCERT

Saturday, December 6, 2025
4:00 p.m.
First Congregational Church
55 Elm Street, Camden

Featuring:

- Choral Bells, First Congregational Church of Camden
- First Congregational Church of Searsport Bell Choir
- Penobscot Bay Ringers, Camden

Doors to the sanctuary open at 3:30 p.m. No pre-concert music.

Free to attend
A great way to get into the holiday spirit!

A free-will offering will benefit
Camden Area Christian Food Pantry

Christmas By the Sea Events

- | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|---|
| Fri. Dec. 5 | Noon | Matt's Musical Variety Show
Sanctuary |
| Sat. Dec. 6 | 9am-2pm | Craft Fair, Pilgrim/Mayflower
Rooms |
| Sat. Dec. 6 | 4 pm | Ringin in the Season~Handbell
Concert, Sanctuary |
| Sun. Dec. 7 | 2 pm | DownEast Singers Concert
Sanctuary |

**Please Join Us
as we celebrate the season!**

Amazonian
handcrafts
ornaments

needle felting
slippers
jewelry



HOLIDAY CRAFT FAIR

Saturday, December 6
9 am - 2 pm

First Congregational Church
55 Elm Street, Camden

*Featuring a variety of fine crafts
made by local artisans*



CHRISTMAS
- BY THE SEA -

hats
mittens
holiday
decorations

candles
quilting
seaglass art
and lots more!

JUSTICE & WITNESS

LGBTQ+ Action Group Update

Big thank you to those of you who made contributions to the **Donations Wish List for The Landing Place (TPL)**! The TPL staff were thrilled to accept our donations of hygiene products, art supplies and To Go Bags (both paper and re-useable tote bags which are needed for youth who shop at the TPL Free Store). A donation of four sturdy backpacks were especially appreciated.

In October, nineteen people gathered for the **Queer Theology Potluck led by Ben Perry**. Ben led a thought provoking interactive discussion. The suggestion that another gathering be scheduled in the new year to delve more deeply into Queer Theology was positively received.

Thanks to all sixteen people who signed up for the **Warm Supper Cooking Group**! **Seven of us will gather at the church on Monday, December 8 to prepare a meal to be delivered on Tuesday, December 9.** The Landing Place offers free Warm Suppers on Tuesday and Thursday evenings with an average of fifty youth enjoying the dinner.

How Can FCC Members and Friends Help?

* **Donate** to the bimonthly (every two months) **FCC Donation Wish List for TPL**. Requests for **December/January** are **hygiene supplies; flashlights and extra batteries; hand warmers and bike locks**. (Recognizing that many of the youth attending TPL have transportation difficulties, TPL has an ongoing, very successful Bike Program which teaches the repair, care, and responsibility of having a bike. Bike locks, essential to good bike care, are given to each youth to whom a bike provided.)

* **Art and school supplies are an on-going request**. These supplies, new or used, are available for use at the **TPL After School Club** offered five afternoons a week where youth ages 11-21 stop by, grab a snack, get a drink, take home some food, use WIFI, take a shower, do laundry, get clothes, hygiene products, and art supplies as well as participate in a variety of planned activities.

* **Volunteer for TPL Cooking Group**: If you would like to help with future cooking projects, please contact Zella Walker.

DONATIONS MAY BE PLACED IN A BIN LOCATED IN THE CHURCH OFFICE.



Vespers Schedule for Fall & Winter

Please join us for 30 minutes of candlelight, peaceful music, prayers, readings, and meditation in the Sanctuary.

Vespers are on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday
of the month, 5-5:30pm.

Here are upcoming dates for your calendars.

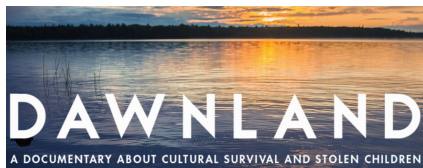
December 3
December 17
January 7
January 21
February 4
February 18

JUSTICE & WITNESS "Dawnland" Film News

More than 100 people came to the Pilgrim room on **on Sunday, November 16 at 2:00 pm** for the showing of the award-winning film "Dawnland," A Documentary About Cultural Survival and Stolen Children - The Story of the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission(TRC).

The Wabanaki Advocacy and Education Sub-group of the Justice & Witness Committee hosted the event.

This was the first event on our new big screen in the Pilgrim Room, and we hope more educational films can be shown in the future.





We Are Excited to be Offering Season 3 of Cake & Community!

When: Fridays in the Pilgrim Room from 12-1pm from January 9- March 27.

We invite you to join us for conversation, companionship, and help in chasing away the winter blues. Teams of volunteers will provide sweet and savory treats and hot beverages. You are welcome to bring a brown bag lunch if desired. Spread the word to friends and neighbors, as all are welcome!

Reiki will be offered on January 30th, February 27th, and March 27th. Special thanks to Lisa Allen for coordinating these sessions.

Please note: Cake and Community will not occur on days when Camden Rockport Elementary School is closed for inclement weather.

Any questions contact Cake and Community coordinator Natalie Ward at wards05@verizon.net.

Thanks, and we look forward to seeing you on Fridays at Cake and Community! Come join the fun!

Dominican Republic Service Trip with Jean Sheehy



In January I will once again be joining the Intercultural Nursing Inc (INI) group for my 5th year to help provide medical care to the underserved communities of El Cercado, in the Dominican Republic.

While I'm not a nurse, I help organize, transport and support the nursing staff as they meet with patients. It's quite rugged and challenging work, but I've come to love being part of this community. We are a small, but mighty team, of 6-10 nurses, 3 Nurse Practitioners, Translators, and "Runners" (that's my job with one or two others). We each bring 50 pounds of personal care items and medical items to be used in daily clinics. I would be so grateful for your help in collecting the necessary items we need to bring. This year I will be leaving a collection box in the Pilgrim Room to collect the requested items:

YOU CAN HELP! DONATION LIST BELOW.

Toothbrushes, adult & kids

Toothpaste, adult & kids

Vicks Vapor Rub (generic is great)

Dial soap (bars, not liquid)

Adult & Pediatric Tylenol (generic is great)

Muscle rub

In addition, I will have an Amazon wish list with other items. Please email me if you would like to donate items thru the Amazon page: tjsheehy23@yahoo.com. I will need to collect all donations **by December 20th**.

Intercultural Nursing Inc. (INI) was founded in 1985 by Evelyn Gaudrault. Historically, INI trips provided an opportunity for nurses and other health care professionals to spend two weeks living and working with underserved communities in the developing Caribbean nations of Haiti and the Dominican Republic on the island of Hispaniola. More recently, INI has worked exclusively with underserved communities in the Dominican Republic to provide ambulatory health care and health education services. INI is partnered with [Social Ministry El Cercado](#), a local organization in the Dominican Republic who helps facilitate our work there.



Shields Fund Administrator
Jeanne Denny

New Ventures in Community Collaboration

All new ventures are met with skepticism, and sometimes open resistance. Change means stepping into the unknown and that makes most of us uncomfortable. This is especially challenging when one considers that we have been conditioned to think in concepts of “either/or,” often referred to as dualistic thinking. So, when we hear homeless, we think of bad, unsuccessful, thievery, etc. while those who live in fine homes are assumed to be good, well-mannered, trustworthy, etc. Consequently, when we start developing new ways of being in the world, it often causes fear, avoidance, chaos, etc. We become equal partners on a new playing field which can be hard on the ego when one is no longer seen as superior.

New endeavors and opportunities are arising each day so imagine my surprise when friends started reaching out to me from out-of-state, friends who watched the CBS special last Sunday morning about the collaborative relationship between the Village Café and the Mid-coast Villager. This is a new venture that combines eating, sharing, building camaraderie and accepting of difference. I’m sure you are familiar with this venture which encourages sharing ideas between community members and members of the local news media as well as other like-minded residents of the community. Through this new creative partnership, ideas are shared, generating respectful discussion of issues rather than adversarial relationships based on “either/or” perspectives. In addition, the profits from the café help support the newspaper financially. Revenues are up over 40% of what the four previous papers generated collectively. The café is generating a reputation for discussion of ideas as well as acceptance of difference, creating meeting times to facilitate all types of discussion group interests!

Similarly, the new housing complex in Rockland is generating new opportunities to learn to live together rather than in separate boxes or silos. In this way, individuals, couples and families can live in proximity, learning about lifestyles of alternative socioeconomic groups, debunking myths, while learning to be supportive of one another. After all, not all persons with means are honest, not all homeless steal, and so it goes. (This has been one of my objections to the

Peace Corps! There is an underlying assumption that the U.S. knows best because we are richer while all the time, we have been undermining the local cultural practices that support a wholistic agricultural approach with the use of toxic chemicals, mass production that produces waste, etc.) What instruction is made available to offer support to families that have been homeless or living in their cars, instruction to care for and maintain the new apartment? These are all new endeavors that require patience and listening to provide support to those seeking to develop ne skills.

Likewise, there is another opportunity to build community by making the FCC parking lot available to families sleeping in their cars. What are the conditions that we need to have in place so that those in need feel comfortable? What do church members need to feel safe? This is an opportunity to help those in need, but we need to be sure we also make church members comfortable and safe. What are the questions we need to ask to make this a realistic collaboration? Who needs to be at the table for this discussion?

There are a couple of homeless shelters that are open during the winter months in midcoast Maine. However, neither shelter is open on a daily basis during these approaching cold winter nights. The shelter at Crossroads, the Church of the Nazarene in Rockland, has limited staffing for the program and can only accommodate a small number of residents, often known to the pastor or his wife. The other facility is the warming shelter offered to the homeless, or those lacking adequate fuel or heat; it is located at the Flanagan Recreation Center in Rockland. They too have limited staffing and are only open during the more extreme temperatures. They need supplies and funding assistance to hire knowledgeable staff that can oversee the safety of the residents needing shelter. For more information about this facility, contact Jessica Bergelin at 207-230-4258 or ewcrockland@gmail.com.

Please consider helping your neighbors who are in need this winter by supporting one of these endeavors and opening yourself to consider alternative new ventures in this chaotic environment of change.

With warmest regards,
Jeanne

Shields Committee: Deb Endl (Chair), Jean Forest, David Giansiracusa, Rich Stuart, David Jones, Zella Walker, Natalie Ward, Jeanne Denny (Administrator)



*from Heavenly Threads
James Cook, Manager*



Help Make “The Threads” Even More Heavenly!

As the holidays approach, volunteers at Heavenly Threads have been busy sorting donations, stocking the shelves, selling items, but having fun and enjoying social time, too. Our work helps to make Midcoast living more affordable for community members, reduces environmental waste, makes clothing and household goods available for the weekly SOS free store, and increases the visibility of the First Congregational Church. In the meantime, the funds we raise not only add to the overall budget of the church, but also contribute to the Shields fund, pay the salary of Shields social worker Jeanne Denny, and make it possible for the Outreach Committee to donate to worthy nonprofit causes such as AIO, the Camden Area Christian Food Pantry, Camden Area District Nursing, Coastal Opportunities, Homeworthy, the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project, the Landing Place, the Knox County Health Clinic, Meals on Wheels, Midcoast Habitat for Humanity, the Midcoast Recovery Coalition, New Hope Midcoast, OUT Maine, Partners for World Health, the Parent Program, PenBay YMCA, Rockland District Nursing, and Trekkers.

If you're looking for a place this winter where you can get out of the house, help people, and make connections, consider joining the Heavenly Threads volunteer team! You can join us for any length of time that fits within your schedule. Right now, we're looking for folks able to come in on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday afternoons.

When it comes to the possibilities at Heavenly Threads, we're only limited by people power. This year, we expanded from two shop days a week to three days. Have you ever wished we could be open another day? With enough volunteer power, it could be done!

If you would like to volunteer for Heavenly Threads, please reach out us by email at heavenlythreads@camdenucc.org or by phone at 207-236-3203. We would be glad to discuss flexible volunteering arrangements and answer any questions you might have.

James Cook, Manager, Heavenly Threads

**We have new Regular Hours
at Heavenly Threads (see Christmas Hours below)
Tues. 1-6 pm (to accommodate those who work until 5)
Wed. & Thurs. 10 am-4 pm
New things every week!
Donation days: Tues, Wed., Thurs. when shop is open.**

CHRISTMAS HOURS

Fri. 12/5, Christmas by the Sea: Pop-Up 1-6 pm
following Matt Mainster's Variety Concert at noon
here in the church.
CLOSED 12/24 and 12/25
CLOSED 12/31 and 1/1

***HAPPY
HOLIDAYS
TO ALL &
THANK YOU
FOR BEING OUR
CUSTOMERS!
LOOKING
FORWARD TO A
GREAT NEW
YEAR IN THE
SHOP!***





Requesting donations
for December

Canned Meats & Canned Tuna

Please leave in the box across from the office, and
thank you for helping.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 12/4 Carrick Lally
- 12/5 Erin Brainerd
Brian Lamb
David Walker
- 12/6 Roy Hitchings
- 12/7 John Hufnagel
Jessica Bergelin
Chris Rothermel
- 12/9 Kayleigh Amerman
- 12/11 Erin Rollins
Judy Flock
Dan Pease
- 12/15 Laura Amerman
- 12/16 Cheryl Roberts
- 12/19 Maria Ryan
- 12/28 Karrie VanRyn



If your birthday isn't listed
please call the office and we'll
add it!



Christmas By The Sea Craft Fair

Your Craft Fair Committee is gearing up for our annual Craft Fair during Camden's Christmas By The Sea festivities. If you are a new member and/or new to Camden you will find that we are known for attracting quality Artisans and Crafters for your shopping pleasure.

The Fair will be held on **Saturday December 6th from 9-2** in the Pilgrim and Mayflower Rooms, winding up in time for our Ringing in the Season Bell concert, another seasonal favorite of the weekend.

If you have a craft that you would like to sell, please speak to Jan Kelsey or Elaine Davis, or you can pick up an application for table space from Becky in the church office. Table fees of \$25 are passed along to our Shields Mission.

NEW IDEA: Perhaps a church committee or a few of you good cooks or bakers would like to have a food table to sell baked goods. This would be a nice new addition to our usual craft selection. Your proceeds could go to a good cause of your choice.

Whether or not you want to bake, cook or sell a craft, we hope you will come to shop and support our awesome local artisans.

FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH
CAMDEN, MAINE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

First Congregational Church
55 Elm Street
Camden, ME 04843

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF CAMDEN
An Open & Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ

Inclusive. Inspired. Involved.

**We are an Open and Affirming Congregation embracing diversity
and affirming the worth and dignity of every person.**

We welcome everyone to share in all aspects of our church life.

To CONTACT US:

Call the Church Office at 207.236.4821, Monday through Friday, 8:30-3:30 pm

E-mail the Church Office at churchoffice@camdenucc.org

Check out our website: www.camdenucc.org