



MARKINGS

The Newsletter of South Acton Congregational Church

DECEMBER 2018

Worship With Us!
Sundays at 10:30am

Child care is available and Sunday School is provided during the service. Our church is handicapped-accessible.

December 2
1st Sunday in Advent

December 9
2nd Sunday in Advent

December 16
3rd Sunday in Advent
Christmas Pageant

December 23
4th Sunday in Advent

December 24
Christmas Eve
4:30 Family Service
7:30 Traditional Service

December 30
1st Sunday after Christmas

**Caroling,
Potluck and
Conradance!**

Join us Sunday, **Dec. 9** for this annual event that spreads holiday cheer and is a ton of fun. Come to any or all parts of the evening. (We kindly ask that all potluck dishes be labeled with ingredients out of respect to different food allergies.)
Caroling: 4:00pm,
Potluck: 5:30pm,
Conradance: 6:30pm. Everyone, Everyone, **EVERYONE** is welcome!!!

Advent is the season of waiting. Since I am among friends, I suppose it is safe to admit that I find waiting to be tough. We could blame it on technology and modern society but I suspect that waiting has never been easy. I remember being small and thinking the space between Thanksgiving and Christmas was an eternity. Now I know I will barely breathe twice and we will be lighting our candles and singing Silent Night. But, that isn't waiting. That is rushing.

Waiting is stopping and bringing stillness to a moment, a season of our life. More often than not, waiting is imposed on us. We wait for news on a medical diagnosis. We wait for a prescription at the pharmacy. We wait for a vacation or the arrival of loved ones. We rarely choose to wait. It seems that waiting is part of the package that we call life. In this, waiting is imposed on us - we can not fix it or change it, we are just stuck.

But, Advent is different. Advent is an invitation to wait, to watch, and keep vigil. Advent is the invitation to the very thing that we never, never, never choose. We light candles to mark the time. Hope, Peace, Love and Joy. The themes even mark the progression of the journey. We always start with hope, it reminds us why we are waiting and usually we are an itchy kind of people and it takes us a whole week of intentional hoping before we can settle into Peace and Love and finally Joy.

Advent waiting isn't just a sitting still and watching out our window. It isn't a stuck type of waiting. You see, I do not believe we are sitting around and waiting for God to show up. I believe that God is always and already here. Advent waiting is active waiting. It is waiting for God to be born in us, anew. We are waiting for God to be born into the world in new ways so that righteousness and justice can spring up around us and in us and in spite of us.

So, how will you wait this season?

1. Our faith community is inviting you to participate in a reverse Advent calendar. It is easy. Every day, you add a non-perishable item to a basket or box. We store ours under our Christmas Tree. On the final Sunday of Advent (12/23) we will bring our 24 items to SACC and fill the front of the Sanctuary for the Sunday morning service. (This isn't a kid thing, y'all. This is an everyone thing!!!!!!)

2. On Sunday, December 23rd, our community will also be participating in an Immigration Prayer Vigil through the Massachusetts Community Action Network. The vigil will happen at 3pm at the ICE Detention Center at the Suffolk County House of Corrections. While it might feel like a long way to go into Boston so close to Christmas, how can we not show our support for our brothers and sisters who are detained and separated from their family, friends and loved ones this holiday season. This vigil will be family friendly.

While we wait, God is being born again in us. When we gather together in worship, when we gather for mindfulness, when we gather to share a meal and carol and dance, when we gather together food for our neighbors and when we gather to remind those who are detained that we see them and support them, God is being born. Will you join me in waiting this season?

♥ Rev. Amy

Rev. Amy Lunde-Whitler is Pastor at South Acton Congregational Church

From the Diaconate

Advent Season starts on December 2nd and it will be a busy time in both the church year and our personal lives. However, we should also remember it is a time of reflection and we should do our best not to get too caught up in all the activity and not spend time with our thoughts and trying to be mindful of what is going on around us.

We have invited the congregation from UCC Boxborough to join us for our annual Caroling/Contra Dance/Pot Luck supper on December 9th. Our always

special and unique children's Christmas Pageant will be presented during the service on December 16th (with rehearsals on the 2nd and 9th), and Ed Rosser will be perform his candlelight seasonal piano music on the evening of December 22nd. We will be holding our two Christmas Eve Services (children's Nativity at 4:30PM and traditional candlelight service at 7:30PM). There are other advent events as well and the deacons will be sending out a calendar with all of them soon. The deacons wish all a peaceful,

meaningful, joyful Christmas season and hope you can join us at as many of these events as possible.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Babcock
Diaconate Chair

Deacon	Last Names
Amber Klauer	A & B
Martha Rounds	C & E
Bob Van Meter	D, F & G
Judy Hodge	H thru K
Laurie Thibodeau	L thru N
Angela Aaronson	O thru S
Tom Porcher	T thru Z

Congregational Board

We will have our Annual Budget Meeting on January 13, please put that on your calendar.

As we head into this delightful season of Advent, we hope you will be able to be in the stillness of our sanctuary to reflect and meditate on the year that is passing and the new one ahead. I feel a calmness when sitting in our church, it's a lovely break from the craziness of the week. Come worship with us and let the calmness and spirit of Christmas wash over you.

A very Merry Christmas season from the Congregational Board!

Pam Rogers
Chair
Congregational Board

SACC Notes

Hi SACC friends,

I've only been to church a couple times this year. I haven't "left," and I miss seeing you. I needed to take a second job, so I've been working on Saturdays as well as during the week. I'm also taking advantage of a perk to begin an online degree, in order to think about what I want to do in a "third act" of my career. Sundays have become about catching up on sleep, catching up with family, doing homework, and once in a while doing something to help Eliz. set up her new private pediatric psychology testing practice. It may be a long sabbatical from church, and I hope you are well and thriving.

George Clark

Dear Friends of South Acton Cong.,
During Sunday worship service, your name was raised during our time of prayer concerns and celebrations. Thank you for helping a member of our congregation move! We will hold you in prayer this week; that God's blessings may rest upon you at this time.

Blessings, West Acton Baptist Church

Missions & Outreach

The Missions and Outreach Committee, which is open to all who are interested, met after church on November 4, to determine what organizations we would allocate funding to, and to voice hopes and concerns going forward.

As we had already decided to give \$500 to Habitat for Humanity earmarked for the renovation of 43 and 45 School Street, we decided to divide the available budgeted funds evenly among the following organizations, giving each \$385. This list represents on-going connections, perceived needs, and enthusiasm for the work being done.

Acton Community Supper and Food Pantry, begun years ago at SACC, continues to feed the hungry in our own community. We support it with in-kind donations as well as funds. Boston Share Network and Household Goods both provide needed furnishings

and supplies to those in need of adequate shelter, and we give leftover Rummage Sale items as well as funds. Both Massachusetts NAMI, serving those impacted by mental health issues, and Concord Prison Outreach, serving those caught up in the justice system, reach out to people who tend to be cast aside. Jeff Loeb's concerts at SACC for United to Benefit Ecuadorian Children sparked renewed commitment to serve the children of Ecuador's markets by helping them to access education. Another effort to help the world's impoverished children to access education is a new mission for SACC, Days for Girls. It provides girls with menstruation supplies so they can attend school. SACC has been sewing supplies as well as now donating funds to support the work.

Looking forward, Linsey Hurley and Sal Alonzo are planning to go to help Puerto Rico with

hurricane recovery efforts in the spring and others expressed interest in defining an adult mission trip to join with them.

Outreach efforts to build community support for understanding and justice include a Shabbat service with Congregation Beth Elohim as well as a November 14 Gun Safety Vigil to highlight the need for sensible gun legislation.

The variety of ways SACC supports missions beyond our walls is complex and often overlooked. We hope to highlight the missions supported through our UCC donations through a monthly mission moment. Please speak with Judy Hodge or Amy Lunde-Whitler if you would like to coordinate this effort.

The next meeting time will be determined, probably after Christmas.

A Rummage Sale “thank you”

I want to share this “Thank you” I received from the Director of the Community Day Center of Waltham (<https://www.communitydaycenter.org/>) after I dropped off several large bags of leftovers from October’s Rummage Sale. I also want to thank all that make the Rummage Sale take place for all the good that comes from it.

*“Peter - Wow! I just got to work...I don't know how you managed such a large donation! You are amazing. Our guests will be thrilled...I haven't opened everything yet--but it feels like Christmas. Thank you so very much, Peter.
With deep appreciation, Carolyn”*

By the way, this is the location where the Chaplains on the Way organization (<http://www.chaplainsontheway.us/>) provides a warm place, hot coffee, and some breakfast food for homeless individuals during the winter months between the time they have to leave the shelters and before the other public areas/services open. This is the effort for which Karen Hodges has asked for SACC volunteers, and where I volunteered last winter and plan to do so again. Please ask me about it if you think you might be interested in volunteering too.

Peter

The Month Ahead

Immigration Prayer Vigil

As Christmas grows near, we are helping to host the December Immigration Prayer Vigil. We will gather at the ICE Detention Center at the Suffolk County House of Corrections on Sunday, **12/23** at 3pm. Parking is available across from the entrance to the Hampton Inn at 811 Mass Ave for \$8. (There is limited street parking in the area.) The current plan is to gather at the corner of Bradston Street and walk over together to the overpass to show support for those in ICE detention. Feel welcome to create signs with supportive and holiday themed messages. Our siblings who are detained and separated from their families, friends and loved ones will be able to see us! We are going out there to support them. These regular vigils are organized by the Massachusetts Community Action Network. SACC is joining with Congregation Beth Elohim, UCC Boxborough and St. Matthews to host this December Prayer Vigil. Please contact Rev. Amy (pastor@southactoncc.org) with any questions or to let her know that you and your family are planning to attend.

Advent Book Study

During the season of Advent, we are joining together to read *The First Christmas* by Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan. We will meet on Thursday night, **12/13** at 6:30pm and on Sunday night, **12/16** at 7:00pm at Terry Martins' house. This book invites us to explore the Christmas story in its original context. Reach out to Rev. Amy if you have any questions.

Harry Potter and the Sacred Text

Gather with us as we continue to read *Harry Potter*, consider some of life's biggest questions, and learn about a Spiritual Practice...or two. We are reading *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* together! We continue our discussion on **December 16** at 3pm in the library. All ages and ideas are welcome!

Second Sunday Food Collection

Please bring in canned and nonperishable foods for our Second Sunday collection for the Community Supper Food Pantry on **December 9**. Soup, cereal, canned fruits & veggies, pasta & sauce, tuna, peanut butter and jelly can be left in the green bin.

Long Winter's Night Service

We will gather with our Sister Congregation, UCC Boxborough, on Wednesday, **12/12** at 7pm. Rev. Amy and Rev. Cindy will co-lead this service on one of the darkest nights of the year as we light candles, sing along with Ed and make space for some of us who are walking through this while feeling the pain of sadness or loss.

Ed's Candlelight Concert

Ed Rosser will continue the tradition of performing a piano concert by candlelight on Saturday, **Dec 22** at 7:00pm. Come and be still and lose yourself in the meditative, seasonal music and beauty of the space. Please bring some goodies to share, if you're able.

Christmas Eve Choir

Would you like to sing in the choir on Christmas Eve, but can't make our usual Wednesday rehearsal? No problem! We will have extra choir rehearsals AFTER church, from noon to around 12:30pm. Please join us – we'd love to have you!

Cleaning Teams for December

- December 1: Marilyn Dow's Team
- December 8: Pam Roger's Team
- December 15: Tom Porcher's Team
- December 22: Angela Aaronson's Team
- December 29: Linsey Hurley's Team

Stewardship Moments

The following are the written version/notes that the various stewardship speakers shared with us over the last several weeks. Their actual spoken pieces varied some, but I found them so compelling I asked them if I could print their written versions in this month's Markings. I hope you find them as compelling as I did and will make your stewardship pledge now (if you have not done so already) or consider increasing it, if you have. Thank you to all of them for speaking on the topic. ~ Peter

Bob Van Meter

I came to SACC for the first time just a few months after Pam and I and our two young daughters moved to Acton in 1993. We had moved from a racially integrated block in Fields Corner, Dorchester where we loved our neighbors but worried about both our safety and the schools that our daughters would soon be entering. We moved to a rental home on School Street in preparation for becoming part of a new community, New View cohousing, that was working to build a new neighborhood in West Acton.

I had just taken on a new job as executive director of a small and struggling housing development non-profit in a Boston neighborhood when I was diagnosed with cancer in the early fall of 1993. I saw an article in the local paper about the tenth anniversary celebration for the pastor of the church that we often passed by on School Street. A combination of seeking spiritual connection in the face of a cancer diagnosis and curiosity brought me to SACC.

I liked what I saw and a week or two later, the pastor called on me in my scruffy office on Harvard Avenue in Allston. I told him that I was already part of two small struggling organizations, the community development group that I had just become the executive director of, and the cohousing community which was still two years away from completion and therefore I hesitated to join a small and to my untrained eye, fragile church.

He did not argue with me but simply listened and soon I was a regular attendee and my daughters were coming to Sunday School and being included in the Christmas pageant. One of our families' fondest memories is that our younger daughter Abby who was three years old in 1993 was given a role as a sheep in the Christmas pageant that year but it was simply too much for her as a three-year-old and so she watched the pageant in her mother arms as her sister Becky age six participated. She participated in many Christmas pageants over the ensuing years including her requisite turn as Mary.

There are many reasons that SACC has been wonderful for me and Pam and our family over the years. from the SACC movers moving us into our new home on Half Moon Hill in 1995, to my kids joy in participating in the junior choir with Amber, to reenacting the scene where Jesus turns the tables on the money changers in the temple with a group of 8 and 9 year old's' in Sunday School, to the value that both of our daughters found in mission trips and in the confirmation process.

Especially important to me has been the interest and commitment of people in the church to social justice. Pam and I met as community organizers in Chicago and social justice has always been central to our professional lives. I was at first not certain how important that this was for the church we attended. I learned that a concern for the broader community was embedded in the DNA of this church and was an important part of what gave the church a great spirit. I remember taking on the mission committee leadership from Gladys Foreman many years ago and learning something of the work that Gladys had done over the years to give practical expression to that concern. I think of her practical compassion as emblematic of the spirit of SACC as is the work of SACC movers and many other things that the congregation accomplishes.

Along the way I also learned that there is something special and unique about how a concern for social justice is expressed in the context of faith. It came for me on a mission trip to New Orleans in 2006 where we joined with folks from West Concord and Boxborough. That was an understanding that the faith we shared with the people whose homes we were working on made the whole experience richer and in some way less awkward than it might otherwise have been. Our shared faith gave us a commonality that helped overcome the racial and class and geographic gulf between us.

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That outward focus continues to flourish here at SACC with new expressions and connections that come with new people to the church but at its core is the principle that we must care both for each other as part of the church but also care for the broader community that we are part of as well if we are to act as Christians. That is why I am glad to continue to be part of this faith community.

Mattias Lacroix

When Rev. Amy talked to me about talking to all of you about stewardship I said o.k. I thought it would be fun. Talking about what stewardship means to the church, talking in front of all of the familiar faces, laughing about it afterwards, generally having a good time. There was only one problem, I did not know what in the world stewardship meant. So my mom looked it up for me and told me what it meant. "The careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care". After she waited a few seconds to see what I would say, I said three words IN ENGLISH PLEASE. After she translated it I started writing this up for you

I think that Stewardship means being a friend, being someone who can look out for other people, being a Scout. But at church it means all those things. Being someone who loves God, shares the responsibility and helps everybody and everything.

Some things that I did were that I helped clean up from the last Rummage Sale. I also sing in the Junior Choir. I sometimes help my mom bake stuff for the Bake sale. I like to visit with people after church like Mrs. Progen and Mr. Wilson. I like to be supportive of church. I love ringing the bell and helping out for Children's Sunday. My dad and I also went to the gun violence rally because we want to show everyone what is important.

I do all these things mainly because my mom wants me to help out the best that I can. I think it is important. We have more to do as we get older it is harder work and more responsibility, but that doesn't mean that there are no upsides. Movies to watch, friends to hang out with, fun times to be had but most importantly as we get older more light to share with everyone else.

My mom explained that when I decided to get baptized, I was choosing part of the church or, more like choosing to be more faithful to God. I am caring for a number and that number is how many people pray, go to church, give thanks, and rejoice in the name of God.

Dulcey Lacroix

SACC for me (and it is for many of you) is family. An extension of my own home family. I have been fortunate to have been part of this family since I was about 14 or 15. That's a long time. No need to talk exact numbers. When I came here with my mom and brother from our previous church, we were lost. We were searching for a place we were welcome. SACC was that place for us.

As my three kids have grown, I have had a lot of conversations with them about family and what it means to be part of a family. We love each other, look out for each other and help and listen to each other. As I am sure is common with a lot of kids, mine have chores to do. Daily and weekly jobs that need to get done. These chores are always a tough area to navigate. They are sometimes seen as drudgery, unnecessary or even punishment. My explanation is that as a family we work together to get things done around the house and yard. The recycling, unfortunately, does not get to the dump on its own and, sadly, the bathroom does not clean itself. It would be unfair and too much work for only one of us to have the responsibility of getting everything done. But when we all chip in and do our part, not only do things get done but we feel equity, being bound together, that we are working together for the greater good of ourselves.

(cont'd)

Our church family is of course the same. There is so much to be done to care for this building, pay the bills and take care of each other. We do our best to care for folks outside of church as well – our community family and our world family.

As I have gotten older I have achieved a much better appreciation of what it means to do my part, but even more, taking joy and satisfaction in doing what I can and what I enjoy to help out. We all have skills and passions and giving from ourselves is the best kind of gift. I have always enjoyed working with youth. It brings me joy to share what I know, and have them share the same with me. I love to see our kids learn, understand, grow and to come to care for each other – as a family. I also love to hear what our kids think about God, our church and our world. I do my best to run the Sunday School and am infinitely grateful for the people who help so much to make it work and are there for our kids. I love to plan and run the Christmas pageant and the Scout Sunday Service and children's service at the end of the year. Although not all the Sunday School kids are my own, I care for them so very much and I think that there are days when I get back a lot more from them than I give out.

I have small parts of other things as well. Giving monetarily what we can. Securing food donations to help the annual Bake Sale and taking a turn cleaning the church or an occasional closet. It can be hard to begin the process of helping, but once I am here the act itself helps me through. My family gives money, of course, but giving of myself seems to mean more.

I encourage of you to give of your best self. Give monetarily what you can. Give what you are excited or passionate about. Then clean an occasional bathroom, or take the recycling. We all know that those won't take care of themselves.

Martha Rounds

I'm Martha. I'm honored to speak to you about why I support our church here in South Acton, and to join others who have touched us with their stories over the past few weeks.

Three weeks ago, we prayed for my friend, Janie, a Jewish woman who was terrified by the murders at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburg. Our prayers joined those of countless other congregations who prayed for peace and comfort. Five days later, I sat with my arm around my friend at shabbat services in West Concord. Though you were not physically with me, I felt your comforting arms around me, too. I realized that I was just as frightened as Janie: for my sons living their faraway lives where I cannot protect them, for my friends, for the people whose loss and pain inhabit my dreams and animate my waking thoughts. But here ... with you ... I am safe, loved, embraced. I experience God's love and the life-changing message of Jesus.

Here, also, I am reminded that we must act, and that we as a church will act.

Last Sunday, I attended a standing-room-only event here in our library. This was our Missions Committee meeting, everybody! People were sitting in every chair and on the floor – determined to use our money to help others in ways that were local and personal, and around our country and the globe. I'm excited about where our money is going! In fact, Bill and I increased the amount of our 2019 pledge after I came home and told him about the meeting. I am proud to support a church that takes giving seriously.

Reverend Don Remick, conference minister of our regional UCC, touched me this week, with these words: "In a world of enormous and overwhelming grief we are called to be people and churches of civility and safety. We are called to hear, learn from, and magnify the voices and experiences of those targeted for pain... So, let us be people and churches who are about God's work."

We have the honor today of pledging our money and ourselves to this remarkable church – which is truly "about God's work." Let's keep building a place that changes, comforts, welcomes, and inspires every person we touch – whether they're here in this room ... or far away, where we will never meet them in person. Thank you, everyone, for doing your part to support South Acton Congregational Church. You strengthen my faith and give me hope for the future.

December

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 8:30 Therapeutic Yoga
2 10:30 Worship 12:00 Christmas Choir 12:00 Congregational Mtg 6:30 Advent Book Study	3	4 8:15 Visit with Amy 3:45 Meditation Walk 7:00 NA Bridge to Recovery 7:00 White Privilege Series	5 6:45 Mindfulness Workshop 7:45 Choir Rehearsal	6 10:00 Stitch and a Prayer 7:00 Metro-West Boston Divorce Support Group	7 3:00 Violin Lessons	8 8:30 Therapeutic Yoga 11:00 Scrapbook Class
9 10:30 Worship 2nd Sunday Food Collection 12:00 Christmas Choir 4:00 Caroling, Potluck, and Contradance	10 6:00 Cong. Board Meeting	11 8:15 Visit with Amy 3:45 Meditation Walk 7:00 NA Bridge to Recovery	12 6:45 Mindfulness Workshop 7:00 Long Winter's Night Service 8:30 Choir Rehearsal	13 10:00 Stitch and a Prayer 6:30 Advent Book Study 7:00 Metro-West Boston Divorce Support Group	14 3:00 Violin Lessons	15 8:30 Therapeutic Yoga
16 10:30 Worship 12:00 Christmas Choir 12:00 Deacons Meeting 3:00 Harry Potter Group 7:00 Advent Book Study	17 10:00 Prayer Shawl Ministry	18 8:15 Visit with Amy 3:45 Meditation Walk 7:00 NA Bridge to Recovery	19 6:45 Mindfulness Workshop 7:45 Choir Rehearsal	20 Markings Deadline 10:00 Stitch and a Prayer 7:00 FOGES 7:00 Metro-West Boston Divorce Support Group	21	22 8:30 Therapeutic Yoga 7:00 Piano Concert
23 10:30 Worship 12:00 Christmas Choir 3:00 Immigration Prayer Vigil	24 4:30 Christmas Eve Family Service 7:30 Christmas Eve Traditional Service	25 7:00 NA Bridge to Recovery 	26 6:45 Mindfulness Workshop	27 7:00 Metro-West Boston Divorce Support Group	28	29 8:30 Therapeutic Yoga
30 10:30 Worship 12:00 Jr. Choir	31					



South Acton Congregational Church

35 School Street · Acton, Massachusetts 01720



South Acton Congregational Church

where you are loved and valued just as you are

Reverend Amy Lunde-Whitler, *Pastor*

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OFFICE HOURS Monday, Wednesday & Thursday, 9am-1pm

Welcome to **South Acton Congregational Church**.

The foundation of our beloved church rests on God's unconditional love and boundless grace. We seek to know God and follow the teachings of Jesus.

We welcome people of every race and culture who are young and old; single, married and divorced. We welcome people of every physical, mental and intellectual ability; sexual orientation and gender identity; every educational background and economic circumstance. We believe diversity enriches our faith community.

CONTACTING REV. AMY

Rev. Amy is reachable by phone: 281-744-3429 or by email: pastor@southactoncc.org Sunday–Thursday and on Fridays and Saturdays for emergencies.