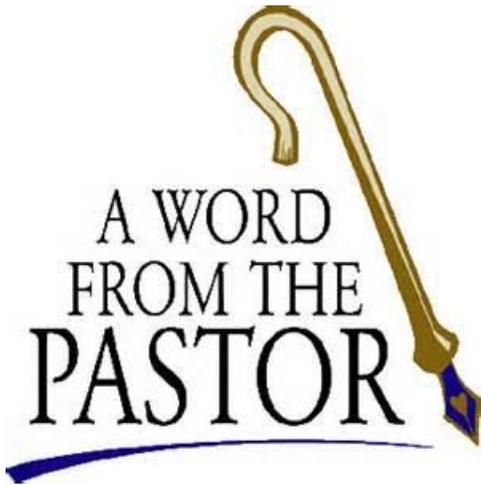


***NORTH BRANFORD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
PARISH VISITOR  
DECEMBER 2020 AND JANUARY 2021***



*Merry*  
CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY  
*New Year*





Isaiah said it. John the Baptist said it. “Prepare.” And the meaning of the word, whether in Hebrew or in Greek, speaks of turning, facing, clearing, dawning, making ready. Prepare. Turning toward God, facing honestly our own weaknesses and challenges, clearing away all that is holding us back from a closer walk with Christ, seeing what's dawning as the Son dispenses the darkness, making ready our lives to welcome Jesus once again. Prepare.

The Season of Advent is just that - a time to prepare, and this year unlike any other, is showing us the value for preparing by showing us the consequences for not doing so. It's so important to be ready, to be prepared. My mom, who's a WWII vet and served in the US Coast Guard, reminds me of their motto, *Semper Paratus*, a Latin phrase meaning "Always Ready". And indeed, the Coast Guard maintains a readiness to protect our coasts and to rescue those in peril on the seas. And when opportunity or crisis arises (and sometimes they're the opposite sides of the same coin), we likewise need to

have taken the necessary and anticipatory steps to respond. I think of the story of the ten bridesmaids recounted in Matthew 25, of the five who were wise and had their oil ready to get those lamps trimmed and burning, while the other five who were unprepared and had no oil ended up missing the wedding banquet. We, too, are always invited to the banquet, but not knowing the exact time

it's to be held, have to maintain our preparedness and be always ready to respond when Jesus appears. Prepare.

“Prepare ye the way of the Lord.” So begins Handel's *Messiah*. So begins the musical, *Godspell*. So needs to begin our Advent, this season of hope, peace, joy and love, this season of new beginnings and new possibilities being offered to us. It's interesting that Isaiah speaks to a people in exile and captivity, far from home. And John the Baptist speaks to a people likewise living in captivity, but close to home. And whether physical or spiritual captivity, whether far or near, Isaiah and John offered a message of hope and of freedom, although it would take God's hand

and a willing heart of the listener to break free from the bondage. We, too, are in exile, captive in our own homes, likewise needing to place our trust in God and cry out to God for freedom from this pandemic. And God will answer us, in God's time and in God's way, but we need to be listening when God is speaking. Prepare.

Advent is a journey, from wherever you are right now and leading to Bethlehem, that humble space of new birth and new beginnings, and not just for Jesus, but for you, too! The road to Bethlehem can at times be rough, dark and scary, taking you through the wilderness and to places you've never been. Yet, the solitude and wilderness of that same road can be filled with times to prepare, times to go deep within yourself, times to shine Light into the darkness, and discover a new you, a 'you' that God has been longing for you to discover all along, a “you” God destined you to become! Prepare.

And please remember, this Advent journey is not a solo mission, it's a co-mission, as God and you travel together, and you are shaped and reshaped by divine and loving hands. And this time of waiting for newness is by no means passive, it's a very active waiting, and the ears of your head and heart need to be wide open to hear God's voice, and then respond. No dozing off, no sitting back, but instead co-operating! How? Perhaps preparing by adopting a daily routine of Bible reading and prayer, including using one of the many Advent daily devotionals available; perhaps preparing by trying new ways to pray – we offered a few earlier this year, happy to share again; perhaps preparing by seeking to heal a relationship with a family member, church member, or friend; perhaps preparing by checking out a local charity about which you feel passionate and which you could support with time, talent and financial help; perhaps preparing by exploring some spiritual readings that may challenge you to grow in your faith. Many exciting possibilities! Prepare.

The prophets testified to it: salvation is at hand. Don't be left out. Prepare! Amen!

Love,  
Vance





<b>Sunday, November 29</b>	10:00 AM	<b>First Sunday of Advent: HOPE</b>
<b>Tuesday, December 1</b>	7:00 PM	<b>A Different Christmas:</b> Meaningful Advent and Christmas Practices in a time of Social Distancing (Zoom led by Wendy Tarry)
<b>Sunday, December 6</b>	10:00 AM	<b>Second Sunday of Advent: PEACE</b>
<b>Wednesday, December 9</b>	7:00 PM	<b>Advent Taizé Service</b> – contemplative music and prayer (Zoom)
<b>Sunday, December 13</b>	10:00 AM	<b>Third Sunday of Advent: JOY</b>
<b>Wednesday, December 16</b>	7:00 PM	<b>Advent Taizé Service</b> – contemplative music and prayer (Zoom)
<b>Sunday, December 20</b>	10:00 AM	<b>Fourth Sunday of Advent: LOVE</b> Drive-In Christmas Pageant for all ages, bring your little ones and join in the fun, faith & fellowship!
<b>Thursday, December 24</b>	11:00 PM	<b>Christmas Eve Candlelight Service</b> – let us celebrate the arrival of the, Light of the World! Please join us virtually for this very special service (have your candle ready) (Zoom)
<b>Friday, December 25</b>	<b>Christmas Day</b>	Remember to take the time to thank Our Father for the amazing gift of His Son!





*A MOMENT  
TO PAUSE*

Listen as the snow falls quietly upon the ground.  
See how it glistens and lights up the world.  
Hear the Angels voices throughout the Heavens  
sending heartfelt tidings throughout the land.  
Baby Jesus is born. Will we ever need more?

*~ fran v. giambalvo*

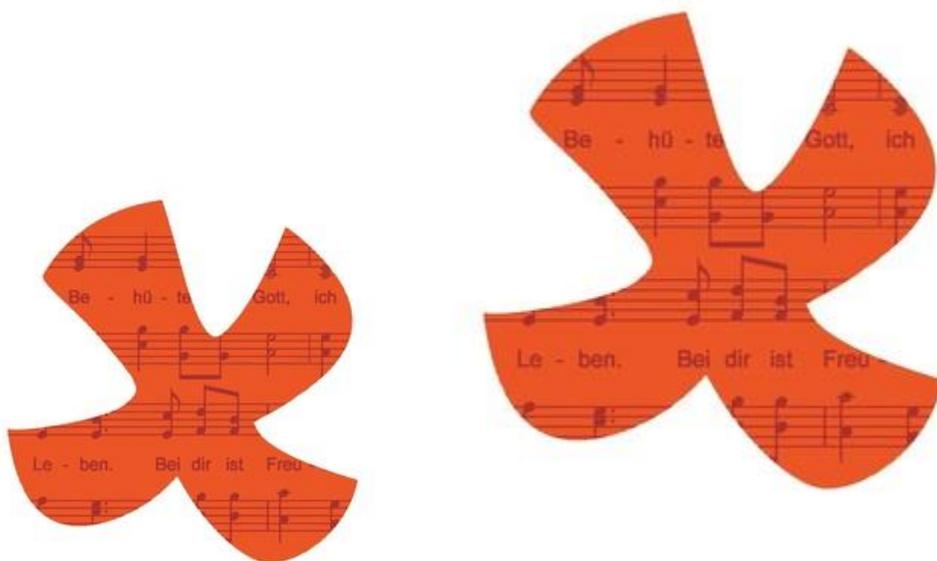




**BEGIN YOUR ADVENT JOURNEY WITH A TIME OF TAIZÉ'  
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9 and 16, 7 PM  
PLEASE JOIN US ON ZOOM**

Dear Church Family – As we begin our journey into Advent, let’s come together for a time of hope, preparation, anticipation, reflecting and repenting, to see where Christ may be leading you. Step into the solitude of Taizé, a wonderful worship of music and praying;

Please invite your family and friends to join us on **Zoom**, for an amazing “spiritual oasis” as we move into the glorious season of Christmas.





ANNUAL  
CONGREGATIONAL  
MEETING

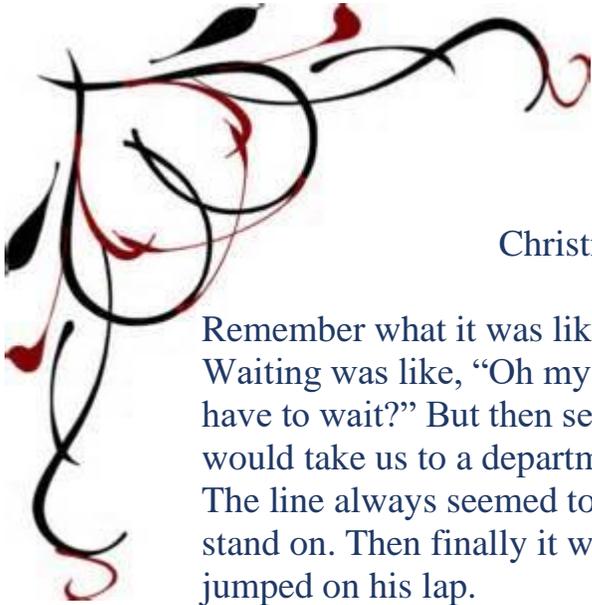
The Annual Meeting of the North Branford Congregational Church will take place on **Sunday, December 13, 2020**. As is our custom, we will gather right after the worship service for our famous carry-in brunch. The meeting will begin promptly at 12:00 noon. We will discuss and vote on the budget and elect the Slate of Officers, Board and Committee members, as well as plan the fundraising events for the coming year.



**DRIVE IN CHRISTMAS PAGEANT**  
**December 20 at 10:00 AM service**

With some creativity, volunteer work and God's help, we are planning to have our annual NBCC Christmas pageant! Covid-safe we will hold the pageant outdoors with folks watching from cars (or lawn chairs if you don't mind the cold)! Scenes will be acted out by household groupings to keep everyone safe. Join us to hear beautiful Christmas music and to share in the wonderful story of Jesus' birth. If you or your children would like to be in the pageant, please contact Wendy as soon as possible [wendytarry@gmail.com](mailto:wendytarry@gmail.com)





## Christmases of Long Ago

Remember what it was like being a kid and waiting for Christmas? Waiting was like, “Oh my goodness! How many more days do I have to wait?” But then several weeks before Christmas our parents would take us to a department store so we could visit with Santa. The line always seemed to be the longest line us kids ever had to stand on. Then finally it was our turn, and we ran up to Santa and jumped on his lap.

The first question Santa would always ask, “Have you been good this year?” Keeping our fingers crossed we would tell him, yes, hoping we weren’t already on the naughty list. Then came the good part when he asked what we wanted for Christmas and we would run down the list we had memorized. And, to make sure Santa wouldn’t forget, we would hand him a list with everything on it even though we mailed our “Dear Santa” letter to the North Pole.

Finally, the waiting is over, and it is Christmas morning. We would jump out of bed as we screamed to our parents to wake up and tell them that Santa came. We would rush into the living room straight to the tree and start tearing the paper and ribbon off the boxes so we could get inside to our presents.

Christmas, in the eyes of every child, is a gift in itself as it is full of the wonder and magic like that first big snowfall of the winter season. Now, just take a moment and go back to your childhood Christmas mornings and remember the excitement, the wonder, and the magic of that day when Santa visited your home. Remember how all of your young Christmas wishes seemed to come true. Yes, even today we can still have that magic of long-ago Christmases, we just have to let that little child within us come out and scream, “Santa came!”

*~fran v. giambalvo*





For  
unto you  
is born this  
day in the city  
of David a Savior  
who is Christ the Lord

Luke  
2:11





There are only two more classes, December 1 and December 15 which will conclude this series in the New Testament.

We hope everyone who wants to keep growing in Christ will join us for Bible Study. We will continue in the New Year, so don't forget to check our announcements when the next session begins.

Wishing all our "Bible Study Friends" a blessed and safe Merry Christmas. Any questions email Jennifer at [bellmad1@aol.com](mailto:bellmad1@aol.com)





Some of us have been blessed with so much  
and it takes so little to reach out to say,  
*“I am here for you!”*

#### Worship Committee

The Worship Committee will hold their monthly meeting on Monday, December 7 at 7:00 pm.

#### Leadership Board

The leadership Board’s meeting will be on Tuesday, December 8 at 6:30 PM.

#### STAYING IN TOUCH

With our sanctuary now reopened for in-person Sunday worship, our Worship Team decided to reduce the frequency of the *Today’s Word* messages on Facebook to twice per week, Tuesdays and Thursdays. If you’re interested in offering a message, please contact me and I’d be delighted to arrange for posting it.

With the decline in time spent producing *Today’s Word*, I’ll now be focusing on making more personal calls to members each week. It would be helpful to me if you know of someone in particular who could benefit from a call this week, whether due to a challenging situation or simply to have a chat. Please e-mail me, text me or call me to let me know. Likewise, the same holds true for you, if I can be of service. During these continuing times of physical distancing and other safety protocols, we can still stay connected!

Love, Vance

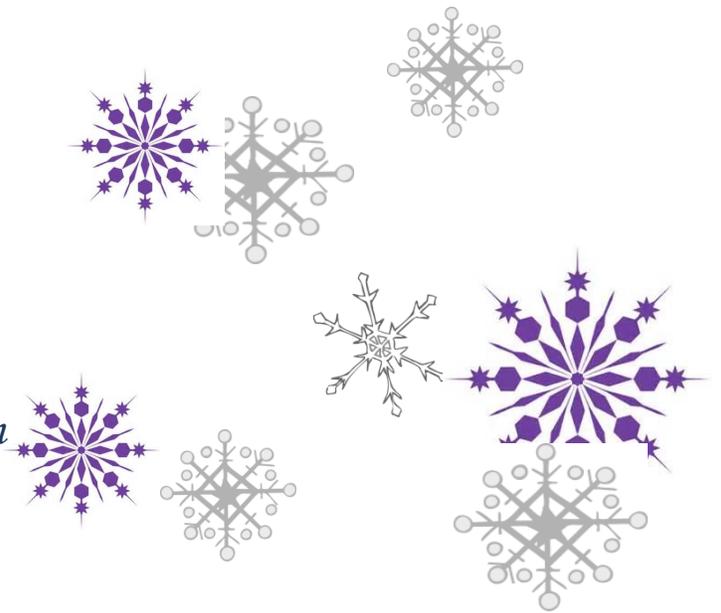


***Christmas is not so much  
about opening presents,  
as it is in the kindness  
of opening our hearts!***



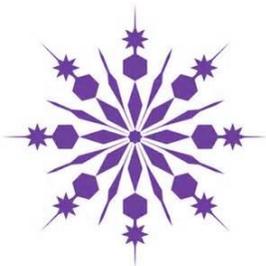
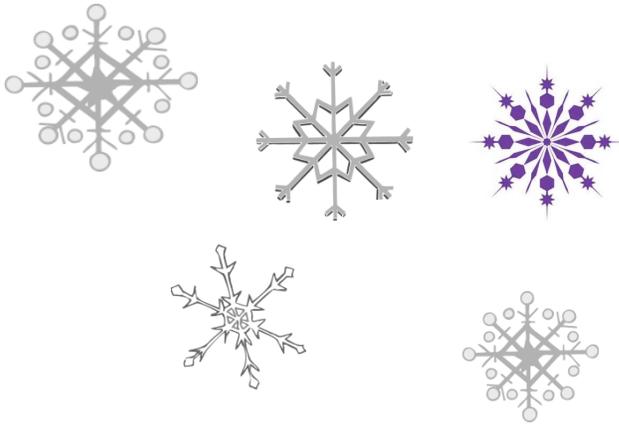
December Birthdays:

- 4: Jane Leschuk
- 6: Melanie Bauchmann
- 8: Sharon Small
- 9: Joanne Palmieri
- 16: Robert Amento
- 17: Nancy Elliston & David Mulligan
- 21: Tyler Reid
- 28: Jonathan Bodwell

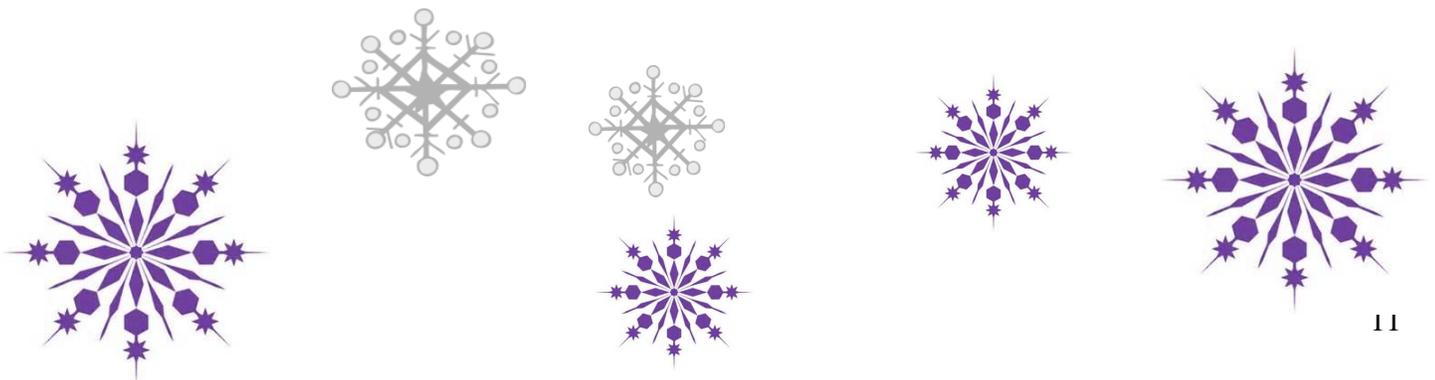
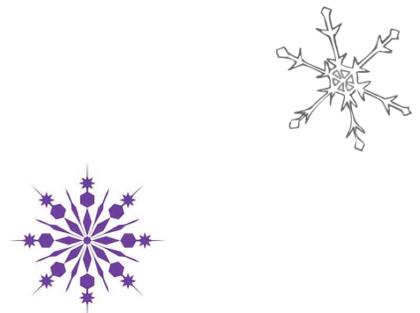


January Birthdays:

- 6: Lucy Berte
- 16: Kim Juniver
- 9: Paul Nanamaker, Skip Borgerson
- 22: John Doran
- 23: Arnie Palmieri
- 25: Ginny Montelius & Terry Parsons
- 30: Diane Farley
- 31: Nancy Bodwell



Forgotten anyone in our birthday list please Call the Church office and let Fran know!





# CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD PUZZLE

USE THE CLUES TO COMPLETE THE CROSSWORD PUZZLE.



## Across

1. One of Santa's Reindeer
3. Santa's Helpers
5. December 25th is \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Christmas Drink
10. The name of a popular snowman.

## Down

2. Christmas Month
4. He hates Christmas!
6. You hang them by the chimney.
8. On Christmas morning we unwrap our \_\_\_\_\_.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ to the world!



# DECEMBER 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 OFFICE CLOSED  7:00 PM A Different Christmas (zoom)	2	3	4	5
6 <b>Second Sunday of Advent</b>  10:00 am Worship	7  OFFICE CLOSED	8  OFFICE CLOSED	9  7:00 PM Taize Service (zoom)	10	11	12
13 <b>Third Sunday of Advent</b>  10:00 am Worship  <b>Annual Meeting Follows service</b>	14  OFFICE CLOSED	15  OFFICE CLOSED	16  7:00 PM Taize Service (zoom)	17	18	19
20 <b>Fourth Sunday of Advent</b>  10:00 am Worship  <b>Christmas Pageant held outside</b>	21  OFFICE CLOSED	22  OFFICE CLOSED	23	24  <b>Christmas Eve 11:00 pm Candle Light Service on (zoom)</b>	25  <b>WISHING EVERYONE A BLESSED CHRISTMAS</b>	26
27 10:00 am Worship	28  OFFICE CLOSED	29  OFFICE CLOSED	30	31		

Keep in prayer every man and woman in the military who are not able to be home to share this Blessed Christmas with their family!



# JANUARY 2021

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1 OFFICE CLOSED  <b>Wishing Everyone A Happy &amp; Healthy New Year</b>	2
3 10 am  Communion Service	4  OFFICE CLOSED	5  OFFICE CLOSED	6	7	8	9
10  10 am Worship	11  OFFICE CLOSED	12  OFFICE CLOSED	13	14	15	16
17 10 am Worship	18 OFFICE CLOSED	19 OFFICE CLOSED	20	21	22	23
24 10 am Worship	25 OFFICE CLOSED	26 OFFICE CLOSED	27	28	29	30
31 10 am Worship						

*Everyday...*

*~ pray for someone who is alone ~*





The North Branford Congregational Church, UCC  
1680 Foxon Road, PO Box 410, North Branford, CT 06471

*The ministers of this parish are all of its members*

**Church Administrator** .....Fran Giambalvo

**OFFICERS and LEADERSHIP BOARD :**

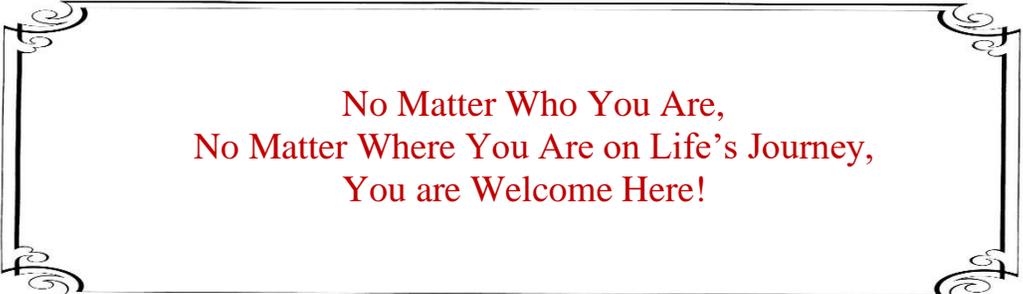
**Moderator** .....Connie Miessau  
**Pastor** .....Vance Taylor  
**Business Manager** .....Jonathan Bodwell  
**Treasurer** .....Jennifer Ramsay  
**Financial Secretary** .....Nancy Bodwell  
**Asst. Financial Secretary**.....Ginny Montelius  
**Clerk**.....Marcia Duenkel  
**Worship Team Leader** .....Donna Cropley  
**Recording Secretary** .....Nancy Allen

**The church office will be closed until further notice.** If you need to contact us, please leave a voice mail at 203.488.8456 pressing 1 for the minister and 0 for the church office manager, or email us at [nobfdcong@sbcglobal.net](mailto:nobfdcong@sbcglobal.net). Your calls and emails will be returned.

e-mail to [nobfdcong@sbcglobal.net](mailto:nobfdcong@sbcglobal.net), or fax to (203) 481-4822

Website: [www.northbranfordcongregational.org](http://www.northbranfordcongregational.org)

**Find Us on Facebook Everyday @ [www.facebook.com/CTNBCC](http://www.facebook.com/CTNBCC)**



No Matter Who You Are,  
No Matter Where You Are on Life's Journey,  
You are Welcome Here!

