



# NATIVITY CHURCH



## **Winter Edition Newsletter**

Dear Nativity Family,

Welcome to winter and the season of love. As I write this, we are preparing for yet another winter snow blessing, bundle up and stay safe. I want to thank everyone in making this past season a wonderful time of faith, fellowship, and fun. Whether it was Living Nativity, Christmas, or the Annual Meeting, so many people poured their hearts and souls into continuing to make this a wonderful and welcoming community of faith to our greater Worcester community. With this new year and new season, we welcome new leaders into the Vestry and other ministry positions, keep it up Nativity the world is depending on us to be a place where the light of Christ shines and serving in ministry is a big part of how that happens. This year our theme is "All In" which is exactly what our faith is about, being "all in". As we have experienced through this pandemic. The needs of the world for Christians to step out in faith and to embody a living faith is needed now more than ever. Thank you to those who have taken that next step in faith and those of you who are prayerfully considering how you can serve.

As we enter this month we are also reminded by the card and candy corporations that Valentines is upon us. For some of us this is a time that we set the dinner reservations at our beloved's favorite restaurant, order the dozen or so red roses, and purchase ample amounts of chocolate in a gesture of the love for those special people in our lives. These traditions that have evolved over the years (and promoted by clever marketing agents) are fun little ways that we celebrate the idea of love and we show gratitude to one another, but they don't define what love is. Valentine's Day is actually more than flowers and candy though, it is the celebration of the life and martyrdom of an actual person, Saint Valentine.

Valentine lived during the second century in Italy. He was a priest (some accounts him as a bishop) in the Christian church and because he was a Christian he was imprisoned for his faith (Christianity being outlawed in the Roman empire at the time) and ultimately executed because of his faith. There are a few accounts attributed to him, the one we tend think of was a letter he wrote to a women who visited him while he was in prison that he signed "from your Valentine" . The other narrative about him is how while in prison, while he ministered, and encouraged fellow captives, through his example of love to these folks the Judge who imprisoned him was so moved by his selfless example that the judge and his household were converted to Christ. Either of these accounts are touching and important because they remind us of the power and strength of love in the lives of humans.

As we enter into this season though, I wonder if we ever really focus on loving ourselves. Look, I am not saying don't buy the flowers and chocolate for your loved one, but what I am saying is have you stopped to love yourself? In the Christian faith we are constantly reminded of the "Imago Dei" that being, we are made in the image of God, or if you prefer, we bear God's image. What that means in our daily lives is that for no other reason than the fact that God created us, we are loved and our worth, value, meaning, is not tied up in anything else. We are not worthy because of anything we do, not our accomplishments, our failures, the amount of money in our bank account, the car we drive, the rank we hold, nope, none of that. We are loved and worthy of love because God made us, uniquely and wonderfully.

I want you to hear that today, maybe you have made some horrible choices and decisions in life that you regret, maybe you are surrounded by people who constantly put you down, tell you you are worthless, dirty, less than. Beloved, don't you believe those lies. You are loved and worthy of love because you are you, God shaped you, formed you, and has not given up on you. You are worthy and you are loved. So, let's make a deal, I'll keep reminding you that your loved, and you promise me that you will remind yourself as well. When you wake up tomorrow, go to your bathroom, wash your face, look in the mirror and repeat after me "I am loved, I am worthy, I am enough". So, get out there in the world, remind everyone that they are loved and worthy, roar like a lion, and remember you are loved and worthy too. Let us also remember that love God has shone in our lives is for the world that surrounds us too and let us all recommit ourselves to being "All In" this New Year

**In Christ,**

**Pastor Chad+**



## Greetings from the Praise Band!

We look forward to seeing more of you in worship and hearing your voices join with us in praise and worship on Sundays. This winter we added a new member **Rachel Pfost** to the band, who has graced us with her lovely voice and presence on Sundays and at the **Living Nativity**.

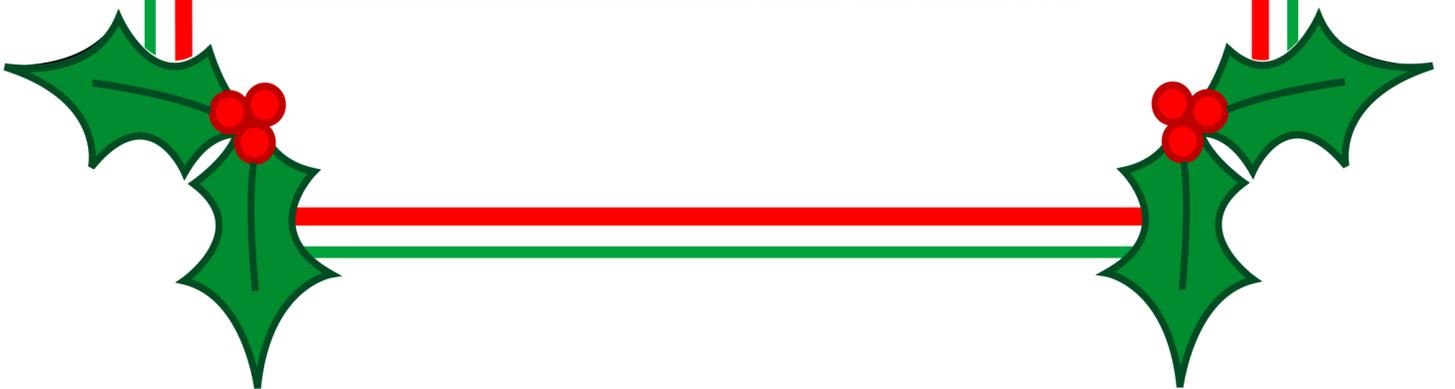
We are open to new members, if only for one song, one Sunday or every week!

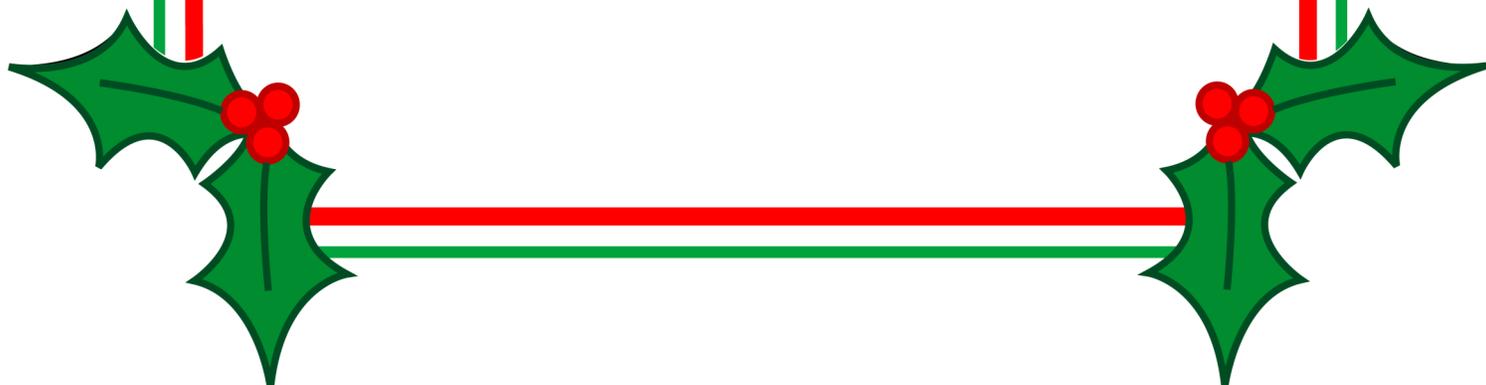
This Christmas Eve at the 4PM family service we were joined by **Glen Campbell** with his portable organ and with the voices of **Dwinell Family**, in addition to our usual crew of **Binto**, myself, **Judy Yauckoes**, **Howie Gelles** and **Dick Hummel**.

This Christmas Eve at 7pm we had special music provided by **Kathy Burmeister** on harp and **Christine Tsen** on cello and voice, in addition to **Judy** and myself.

You can hear some of what you missed on Youtube: [https://youtu.be/4s\\_rgZlmxFl](https://youtu.be/4s_rgZlmxFl)

The 4pm service is available on Facebook: <https://fb.watch/aLSv2mTZEw/>









## The Living Nativity

When **Bill Otto** volunteered to run the Living Nativity this fall, he never dreamed of how much it would entail. But despite the many challenges of labor, weather, illness, and teamwork, the event came together at 5pm on Sunday, December 19. Many parishioners pitched in to help, from donating refreshments, to assisting last minute with greeting, parking, and serving refreshments, to spending hours well in advance organizing the script, music, cast, costumes, refreshments, and publicity; decorating the church building; or putting in the skill and heavy labor required to repair and renovate the stage. Many thanks to all who helped! Several members are still working on taking down the scenery.

Despite a postponement due to unsafe and miserable weather conditions, about one hundred folks turned out and enjoyed the performance. They were welcomed in the parking lot at Zeh and directed to the new outdoor venue in the Nativity parking lot for cookies and cider. They then gathered to join in beautiful carols sung by our choir and watch as our youngest members acted out the first Christmas, with narration of the Bible story by **Brad Nutting**. **Michelle Williams** brought animals to liven up the scene, including an alpaca and ram which got a little restless. The wise men rode in on "camels" rather than horses this year, and were greeted by a "toddler" Jesus at his house. At the end of the play, **Fr. Chad** invited the audience to visit Nativity for our Christmas or regular services.



*Silent Night Oh Holy Night.*







When I say,

**"I AM A CHRISTIAN"**

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When I say, "I am a Christian," I'm not shouting, "I've been saved!" I'm whispering, "I get lost sometimes! That's why I chose this way."

When I say, "I am a Christian," I don't speak with human pride. I'm confessing that I stumble needing God to be my guide.

When I say, "I am a Christian," I'm not trying to be strong. I'm professing that I'm weak and pray for strength to carry on.

When I say, "I am a Christian," I'm not

bragging of success. I'm admitting that I've failed and cannot ever pay the debt.

When I say, "I am a Christian," I don't think I know it all! I submit to my confusion asking humbly to be taught.

When I say, "I am a Christian," I'm not claiming to be perfect. My flaws are all too visible but God believes I'm worth it.

When I say, "I am a Christian," I still feel the sting of pain I have my share of heartache, that's why I seek God's name.

When I say, "I am a Christian," I do not wish to judge I have no authority ... I only know I'm loved.



• **Reconciliation: Putting a Burden Down**  
**A Lenten Quiet Day with the Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas**  
**Saturday, March 19**  
**9:30 a.m. – 12 Noon • Online (free)**

In every act of reconciliation, we connect with the boundless love of God. Through brief presentations and conversation, as well as silent prayer and guided meditation, this online Lenten retreat will give us space to explore and to pray about the places in our lives where God may be inviting us to let go our burdens of resentment, guilt, or shame.

• **Looking ahead to Lent: Daily prayers for creation**

During Lent, which begins on March 2, please consider praying daily for God's creation. Here are two offerings.

**Renewing God's Creation: Daily meditations for Lent**

Lent invites us to reflect on our relationships with God, each other, and the Earth upon which all life depends. The Creation Care Leadership Circle, a small group in the Diocese of Western Massachusetts that advises our Missioner for Creation Care, invites you to sign up to receive an inspirational daily meditation (including a short quote and an image) during the Forty Days of Lent. The quotes come from many sources as we honor the wisdom of many voices and traditions. Please join us as we contemplate the gift of the natural world and our calling to reconcile humanity with the rest of God's creation. [Sign up here.](#)

Before Lent begins you might also like to get a copy of Leah Schade's daily devotional, **For the Beauty of the Earth**. Its daily Lenten meditations connect Christian faith with caring for God's creation. This small book can be ordered in bulk at a discount, and the price is very reasonable.

Electronic links in Email and on website!

