



The Outreach

The newsletter of the Milford United Methodist Church
December, 2023 Milford, NH, Rev. Dr. John Whitley, Pastor

Pastor's Corner

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Co-travelers in Christ,

One thing that I've learned about myself in adulthood is that I am a creature of habit. I come by it honestly—I come from a family (on both sides) that likes organization and patterns and that finds comfort in regular rhythms that tame life's chaos into a steady, regular beat. One of the ways that that has shown up in my ministry, I've noticed, is that on certain days and in certain times of year there are hymns that I just have to sing, and foremost among those is the one that comes first for me on the first Sunday of the church year, every year. The first hymn that I select for the first Sunday in Advent is always "People, Look East" (UMH 202). At first, it came about as a bit of a coincidence—I would sit in my chair with all of my notes and all of my thoughts, think through the lesson of the day and the tone of the service, consider what candle was going to be lit on the advent wreath, and try to approach Advent worship each new year with fresh eyes and fresh perspective. And every single year I found myself coming to the same conclusion—"People, Look East" comes first. Despite all of my attempts at new perspective and originality and despite every intention to mix things up a little each new pass around the sun, I was always coming to the same conclusion.

The title of that hymn, for me, sounds jarring—it's a shout and a command: People! Wake Up! Snap out of your day-to-day preoccupations! Lift your heads up! Look East!—and the four stanzas invite its singers to think afresh about what preparation might mean from different angles and using distinct and rich imagery. We're looking east, it tells us, because we're beginning our preparations to receive a visitor, who goes by the name of Guest, Rose, Star, and Lord and what a different thing it is to make preparations for the coming of a Guest, a Rose, a Star, and a Lord. For one I might clean the house; for another I might loosen soil and fertilize the ground; for the third I don't know—but an expensive telescope? Prepare for the apocalypse?; and then there's preparing for a Lord. In recognizing this pattern I have, I decided that it's long past time to dive deeper into what fascinates me about this hymn and so I'm going to be preaching through it, stanza-by-stanza, through Advent this year, and one of the things that I would like to ask of you as you enter Advent to the call and command to lift your gaze and look eastward, is to do some tilling of the soil of your imagination. Prepare them to think

Pastor's Corner Cont'd

and imagine with new images, new metaphors. Prepare them to be in a mode of engaged wonder—maybe you could walk lockstep with the preparation calls of the hymn by mimicking its call toward preparations each week through each stanza of the hymn. For week 1, clean the house and, as you do, engage with that activity in a different way—you're preparing for the Guest and transforming your activity into a spiritual exercise. For week 2, plant something—take time with it, pray with it, engage with it as though you are preparing a space in the world for the Rose that arrives with beauty. Week 3 will be the week we look for a star and it just so happens that that very week will be the darkest week of the calendar year. There will be plenty of night sky available, plenty of stars to look at in that week leading up to Christmas. Take an opportunity one evening that week (at least) to go outside, look up at the night sky, experience the "frosty weather" (as the hymn says) and pray with that great parable of light entering darkness that we find in John 1:1-18. And then, on Christmas Eve, having tried out those different ways of preparing, we're going to join together in worship to see what it might be to prepare for a Lord.

There will be lots of activity around the church for this season. I am going to hold a seasonal study twice a week—Tuesdays and Thursdays as noon and at 5pm through Advent—to look at the themes and scriptures of the week together. We will continue our Wednesday potluck book study and include in that some singing of favorite carols. We will have our Christmas Fair this Saturday (12/2), our annual Christmas concert on 12/17 at 4pm, our annual Blue Christmas service on 12/22 at 7pm, and Christmas Eve will include a morning

combined service at 10:30 and evening services at 5, 7, and 11pm. What a great season to ready our hearts!

In Christ!

Pastor John

Salvation Army Bell Ringing

From Pat Rafter

We will be ringing bells at Market Basket on Saturdays 10-2 and Shaw's on Sundays 12-4. This season of ringing begins on Nov 25 and runs through Christmas Eve. We will ring at both stores Christmas Eve 12-4.

There are only about 7 slots left as I publish this but please, take a look and sign up if you can. Shoppers are very gracious and often remember us year to year.

25% of what is collected stays local. Pastor John is in charge of disbursement of these funds.

Sign up for ringing slots!



Cora & Avery Herlihy ringing (with Dad, not shown) last December

Share Adopt a Family From Pat Rafter

We will be supporting the SHARE adopt a family for the holiday again this year. We have 2 families with 3 kids each, and we are hoping to spend about \$100 per child.

A small tree will be in the narthex beginning Dec 3 with gift tags to choose with items requested by these families. Items will need to be returned to the church by Thursday, Dec 14 by noon.

It has been a very successful program for many years. SHARE is expecting a record number of families with needs this year. Let's do our best to support this community outreach!



"It is Christmas in the heart that puts Christmas in the air."
—W.T. Ellis

Moments of Incarnation

The wonder of the infinite-personal God is displayed, more than anywhere else, in the Incarnation. Nothing can prepare us for the birth of God: a six-pound, four-ounce Jewish boy with dark brown curly hair born in the fall or winter of 5 B.C. in a shepherd's cave on the side of a hill in the city of Bethlehem in the Roman province of Judea in western Asia.

It is so particular it staggers the imagination. God found a parking spot, a specific place and time where his love would touch our world. [Similarly,] prayer is a moment of incarnation — God with us. God involved in the details of my life.

—Paul E. Miller, *A Praying Life*



Noise Offering for
Wanakee
December 10



This collection will happen the 2nd Sunday of the month.
Quiet Money is always welcome too!

*Support the Protect
Vulnerable Immigrant
Youth Act*

From Bishop Johnson

I am writing to urge you, the pastors and laity of the New England Conference, to speak up on behalf of vulnerable youth and religious workers who are in the immigration process.

Please ask your Senators and Congressional Representatives to support the **Protect Vulnerable Immigrant Youth Act**. A recent proposal in Congress puts visas for vulnerable youth and religious workers in the same category that would allow very few to become citizens.

Without the *Protect Vulnerable Immigrant Youth Act* some of our own pastors will not be able to complete the immigration process and will lose their path to citizenship; some may even be forced to leave the United States.

Please use the link below to let your voice be heard.

In addition to the text provided, you can include a personal note. If you want to do more, you can call your lawmakers and stress that this is an issue of justice and needs their consideration and support.

If you don't know who your lawmakers are, this form will identify them for you

when you fill in your mailing address.

I encourage you to bring this link with you to church and invite everyone to support this vital legislation to protect religious workers and vulnerable youth. Your voice can make a difference.

Our United Methodist Book of Resolutions states "Migrant rights are human rights ... Christians don't approach the issue of migration from the perspective of tribe or nation, but from within a faith community of love and welcome."



Immigrant Ministry

There may be links in this month's Outreach. The link can be activated by highlighting the link and right clicking to bring up the dialog box and scrolling to "open hyperlink".

"He was created of a mother whom he created. He was carried by hands that he formed. He cried in the manger in wordless infancy, he, the Word, without whom all human eloquence is mute."
—Augustine of Hippo

Our MUMC Family Out in the World

Bishops Message cont'd from pg 7

As the Social Principles remind us, "The church must continually exert a strong ethical influence upon the state, supporting policies and programs deemed to be just and opposing policies and programs that are unjust." (Paragraph 164B).

This is who we are as United Methodists and followers of Jesus Christ. As we offer our prayers for these three young men, I encourage you to use your voice to speak out against hate crimes and engage in the hard work of dismantling the systems that create them.

MUMC folks are still spreading JOY!



Lindsay, Jason & Haylee bowling!



Jenn, Chris, & Ben Erdody getting ready to open gifts



Clint Weis completed BAA half marathon while Riley & Ryder worked behind the scenes at the theater! Annika, their #1 fan



Lincoln St Jean at the great Colonial Clash



Ryder Tlapa BU 13 Hampshire United champs

Have you got pics of you & yours sharing the joy? Let's share here. Send to me; at office@milfordumc.org, or friend me on Facebook and share what you're up to.

In December SHARE Is Collecting

Pancake Mix & Syrup, Condiments, Cooking Sauces & Seasonings, Cooking Oil, Jelly, Cold Cereal



Food Pantry Needs

SHARE Collection

Share Supper
Tuesday December 18, 2032

Look for signup sheets in the Narthex



COMMUNITY DINNERS

Family Life

**With LeeAnne Steenhoek,
Youth and Family Ministry Director MUMC**

Consider all the joyful ways we share Christ through experiences with those we love. I especially love that a trip to the library or a museum may be free! Sledding and cocoa, a star walk (alone or with an astronomer), a hot chocolate caroling with friends on the Milford Oval are all possibilities. Be present. Be present with God and all those you know and love as you enter this pilgrimage to Bethlehem. Walk in love and light and faith. Emmanuel. God with us. Emmanuel. May it be so.

"Star Giving" by Ann Weems (from "Kneeling in Bethlehem")

What I'd really like to give you for Christmas is a Star . . .

Brilliance in a package,
something you could keep in the pocket
of your jeans or in the pocket of your
being, something to take out in times of
darkness, something that would never
snuff out or tarnish, something you
could hold in your hand, something for
wonderment, something for pondering,
something that would remind you of
what Christmas has always meant:
God's Advent Light into the Darkness of
this world.

But Stars are only God's for giving,
and I must be content to give you words
and wishes and packages without Stars.

But I can wish you life as radiant as the
Star that announced the Christ Child's
coming, and as filled with awe as the
Shepherds who stood beneath its Light,
And I can pass on to you the love that

has been given to me, ignited countless time by others who have knelt in Bethlehem's Light.

Perhaps, if you ask, God will give you a Star.



Speaking Out Against Hate

Crime

From Bishop Johnson

Over the weekend three college students of Palestinian descent were shot in Burlington, Vermont. Two of them are U.S. citizens and the third is a legal resident.

Two of the three victims were wearing a keffiyeh, which is a symbol of Palestinian nationalism, and were speaking in Arabic when they were approached by a white man who opened fire.

The three are hospitalized. The New York Times reports two are in stable condition, the third sustained more serious injuries.

A suspect has been arrested and this is being investigated as a possible hate crime. The FBI is participating in the probe along with other agencies. To Pg 7

Christmas Concert From Jenn Erdody

Our MUMC musicians have been busy preparing for the Advent and Christmas seasons, and of course for our annual Christmas concert! The concert will be held on Sunday, December 17th, at 4:00. Please invite family and friends to join us for a wonderful afternoon of Christmas music!



Last Minute Crop Walk Updates From Pat Rafter

There is an award on Pastor John's desk for "First Place in the Large Church Category". Yay!

To all who supported this event with your feet, your gifts, or your prayers, thank you!

The total raised was (still not a final number) was over \$47,000 of which MUMC raised over \$5,000.

Indeed, *many hands make light the work!*



December Dates To Clip and

December 2	Craft Fair 9a.m.-1p.m
December 3	1st Sunday of Advent
December 3	Messiah Sing 4 p.m.
December 17	Christmas Concert 4 p.m.
December 22	Blue Christmas 7 p.m.
December 24	Combines Service 10:30 a.m.
December 24	Family Worship 5 p.m.
December 24	Traditional Worship 7 p.m.
December 24	Communion Service 11 p.m.
December 31	Regular Services

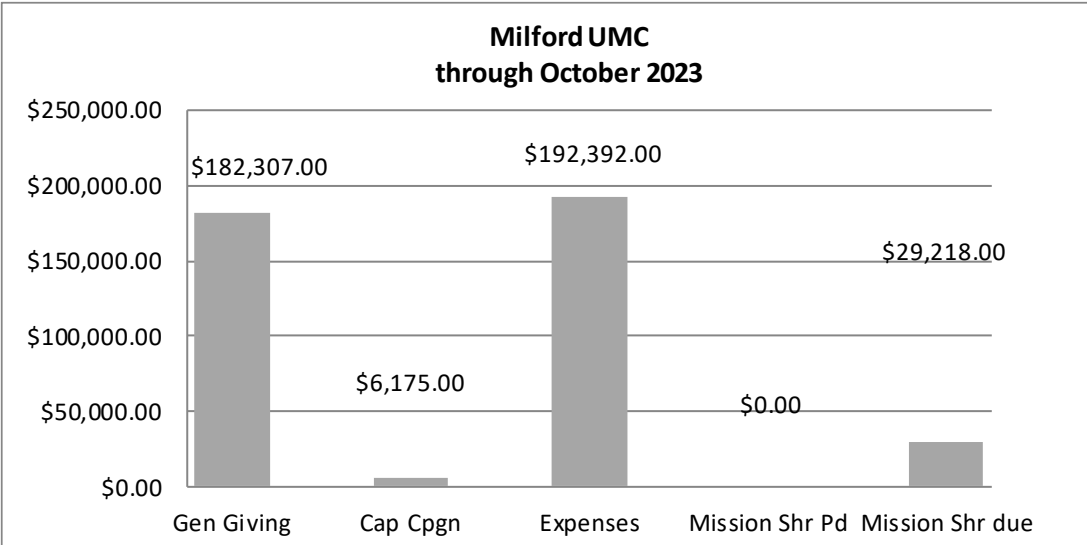
Bishop's Message cont'd from pg.6

It is important, always, to call attention to incidents like this one. If it is found to be a hate crime, our voices must be among those decrying violence driven by hate and fear. Such acts are on the rise in recent weeks. The United Methodist Social Principles state: "We deplore acts of hate or violence against groups or persons based on race, color, national origin, ethnicity, age, gender, disability, status, economic condition, sexual orientation, gender identity or religious affiliation." (Paragraph 162).

The *UM Book of Resolutions* calls us to address the systemic roots of hate crimes: "If we look at these as acts of individuals or groups of individuals, we will fail to recognize the systemic context of injustice that give rise to such acts."

Financial Reports

From Kirk Randlett, for the Finance Committee



General Giving	\$182,307.00
Mortgage Fund	\$6,175.00
Expenses	\$192,392.00
Mission Shares Paid	\$0.00
Mission Shares Due	\$29,218.00



- The miracle of giving is that giving makes miracles.
—Bishop Robert E. Goodrich



Milford UMC
General Fund
<https://www.umc.org>

OR Code



If you see any of these folks around town, be sure to wish them a happy day!

Birthdays:

- December 2:** Terri Henderson
- December 3:** Jim Kostuk
- December 4:** Marilyn Edmondson
- December 7:** Holly Philbrick
- December 8 :** Jason Lambert
- December 11:** Wendy Ayotte
- December 11:** Lily Eves
- December 11:** Bruce Houston
- December 12:** Amanda Quintana
- December 17:** Jonah Farnsworth
- December 18:** Rich Rudolf
- December 24:** Steve Rafter
- December 25:** Carol Rowlette
- December 30:** Elaine Driscoll
- December 30:** Diane Bellerose

Anniversaries

The office calendar shows no anniversaries this month. Hope we didn't miss yours.



We would love to include you on the birthday and anniversary list. Won't you share your special dates at office@milfordumc.org

This Month's Lectionary

December 3: Isaiah 64:1-9, Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19, 1 Corinthians 1:3-9, Mark 13:24-37

December 10: Isaiah 40:1-11, Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13, 2 Peter 3:8-15a, Mark 1:1-8

December 17: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11, Psalm 126, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24, John 1:6-8, 19-28

December 24: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16, Romans 16:25-27, Luke 1:26-38, Luke 1:46b-55

Christmas Eve, Year B, Isaiah 9:2-7, Psalm 96, Titus 2:11-14, Luke 2:1-20

December 31: Isaiah 61:10-62:3, Psalm 148, Galatians 4:4-7, Luke 2:22-40



Driving Ministry

If you are in need of a ride and have no place to turn, call the office and we will notify the driving ministry to help you out.

This program is primarily directed to our handi-capped and seniors, but anybody who needs a ride and can't find one is eligible. There is no charge for this service. Office 603-673-2669 Steve Takacs 603-672-5118 office@milfordumc.org trumpetchoo@msn.com



Committees, Groups and Ministries

If you are interested in becoming involved with, or learning more about, a committee or group on the

Administrative (Ad) Council: Janet Hromjak
Reviews monthly committee meetings, discusses pending issues and votes on church-wide decisions.

Adult Mission Trip Steve & Pat Rafter

Bell Choir: Heidi Rocha
For adults and older kids interested in hand bell ringing.

Christian Aftercare Ministry: Callie McMahon
Serving primarily men leaving prison, helping them settle in new homes and productive, positive lives.

Chancel Choir: Jennifer Erdody
Open to adults and teens interested in singing in the Chancel Choir at the second service.

Community Supper: Kerri-Lynn Kimner
*A supper we host at SHARE in Milford every 6-8 weeks. Volunteer to help bake or prep ahead of time, or to work at the supper itself. **Restart Coming Soon***

Driving Ministry– Steve Takacs
Provides transportation for those in need of help. Call the church office for contact information.

Finance: Andy Baver
Oversees church financial commitments

Home Groups: Steve Rafter (Thursday) or Callie McMahon (Friday) **hold due to covid**
Expands spiritual experience in a social context, meeting at a host's homes.

Lamplighters: Elaine Driscoll & Carol Rowlette
A Bible-study group for women.

Nominations: Pastor John. *Matches people with the committees they might be interested in serving on.*

Outreach:
Focuses on ways our church can reach out to the local, regional and international community.

Children & Family : LeeAnne Steenhoek
Focuses on involving Children and

Families in church events and spiritual growth.. Family Worship room available during service

Children's Church: LeeAnne Steenhoek
10:40 Sunday morning year round.

Praise Band: Steve Rafter, Lisa Payne, Rudy Rumohr
Contemporary Christian music that plays at the first service on Sunday.

Staff Parish Relations (SPR): Sue Rudolf
This committee acts as liaison between our staff and the congregation.

Stephen Ministry: Callie McMahon
Provides confidential one-on-one Christian care with trained lay ministers.

Trustees: Steve Rafter
Oversees and facilitates the care and keeping of the church building and parsonage.

White Tops: Everett Gale
A social group for retired men of all denominations.

Worship Committee: Carol Rowlette
Plans and facilitates Sunday service needs and organizes special Sundays

Worship Design: Steve Rafter
Plans music and worship for the contemporary Sunday service.

Vacation Bible School: TBD

VOICE *Giving voice to the marginalized in our community. Janet Hromjak, Claire Holston, Callie McMahon. Esther Thayer, Kerri-Lynn Kimner, Kathy Wood, Annika Weis*

Men's Group: Jim Lawler
For men interested in fellowship and service. Meet Sunday Evenings

Youth Mission Trip Tom Knapp
Works with the youth and organizes mission work near and far.

December 2023

For Virtual Services starting at 10:30 a.m. Sunday, join Us On-Line from our Facebook page Milford United Methodist Church, A Reconciling Congrega-

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

					1	2 9-1 Craft Fair
3 8:30 Spirit Celebration 9:40 Sunday School Children's Church 10:30 Traditional Service 7 Men's Ministry	4 5:30 VOICE 6 SPR	5 7 Praise Band	6 8:45 Coffee w/Pastor. Union Coffee 9 Whitetops 1 Lamplighters 6 Potluck 6:30 Prayer / Study Zoom	7 12 Hybrid Study 5:45 Bells 7 Choir	8	9
10 8:30 Spirit Celebration 9:40 Sunday School Children's Church 10:30 Traditional Service 7 Men's Ministry	11 7— Trustee's Committee	12 7 Praise Band	13 8:45 Coffee w/Pastor. Union Coffee 9 Whitetops 1 Lamplighters 6 Potluck 6:30 Prayer / Study Zoom	14 12 Hybrid Study 5:45 Bells 7 Choir	15	16
17 8:30 Spirit Celebration 9:40 Sunday School Children's Church 10:30 Traditional Service 4: Christmas 5: Concert 7 Men's Ministry	18 7—Finance Committee	19 7 Praise Band	20 8:45 Coffee w/Pastor. Union Coffee 9 Whitetops 1 Lamplighters 6 Potluck 6:30 Prayer / Study Zoom	21 12 Hybrid Study 5:45 Bells 7 Choir	22	23
24 10:30 Combined Service 5p Contemporary Service 7 Traditional Service 11 Carols, Scripture, Communion 31/ Combined Service 10:30	25	26 7 Praise Band	27 8:45 Coffee w/Pastor. Union Coffee 9 Whitetops 1 Lamplighters 6 Potluck 6:30 Prayer / Study Zoom	28 12 Hybrid Study 5:45 Bells 7 Choir	29	30



Milford United Methodist Church

327 No. River Rd
PO Box 476
Milford, NH 03055
(603) 673-2669
www.milfordumc.org

December 2023

Sunday Worship Times:

8:30a. Spirit Celebration, 10:30a. Traditional Service, Children's church 9:40a.
Watch Us Online Facebook & YouTube @10:30
Rev. Dr. John Whitley, Pastor

Milford United Methodist Church

A Reconciling Church

Discover the Joy!

Rev. Dr. John Whitley, Pastor

Our Mission:

The Milford United Methodist Church exists to help **all** people discover the joy of knowing and serving Jesus Christ.

Our Vision:

We will help all people discover the joy of knowing and serving Jesus Christ by:

- Providing joyful and meaningful worship experiences.
- Establishing and encouraging small groups for study, support, prayer, fellowship and service.
- Empowering people to discover, develop, and deploy their gifts for ministry.
- Reaching out beyond our congregation in Christian love and service.

Our Values:

We commit ourselves to:

- Know scripture and live it.
- Act with integrity.
- Be faithful to Jesus Christ, our families, and our church family.

- Strive for excellence in all we do for the Lord.
- Celebrate the ministry of all Christians, lay and ordained.
- Treat all people with respect and sensitivity.
- Encourage people to grow in Christ.
- Care for the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of all people.

Welcoming & Inclusion Statement:

Milford United Methodist Church is a welcoming and inclusive church which celebrates that all persons are created in God's image and are of sacred worth. We welcome and serve persons without regard to age, race, culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, family configuration, religious background, economic status, or developmental and physical abilities. Milford United Methodist Church recognizes the diversity of the Body of Christ and gives thanks to God for this divine gift. We invite ALL to discover the joy of knowing and serving Jesus Christ.