



THE ROLLING STONE

Rollstone Congregational Church

United Church of Christ
199 Main Street, Fitchburg, MA

Pastor: Rev. David B. Hanks 978-821-9571
www.rollstone.org

Pastor's View

JANUARY 1, 2022

Happy New Year

Happy New Year to all our family and friends at Rollstone Congregational Church. I hope that all of you had a wonderful and meaningful Christmas season, even with all the concerns of COVID-19 and the variants that seem to be popping up around us. As we start a new year filled with many hopes and dreams, we must look at the past to build a stronger and more promising future. We survived the impact of COVID-19 on our lives and still manage to adapt to rapidly changing conditions, it is our due diligence and faith that has kept us strong. The church continues to move on despite the massive inflation and unpredictable conditions caused by so many factors. Our meetings and gatherings remain fluid as we adapt to the current situations and the need to either mask-up or maintain social distance. I want to thank each of you for your continued cooperation and willingness to change on a moment's notice.

The year 2021 was filled with various challenges and we survived. What will 2022 have in store for us? There will be challenges from many different things that will impact the church and our viability as one of the few remaining mainline protestant churches that continue to operate in Fitchburg. In preparation to face our challenges we have taken some bold steps towards building a better and brighter future. As we finished off 2021, the church voted to enact the revised by-law proposal which is now in effect. The changes were designed to give a louder voice and the ability to act by a larger group of leaders by creating a church council. If you have any concerns about the church and want to talk about it, please contact any member of the council. While this council may not agree on everything, each one has committed themselves to work together for the betterment of the church. We encourage everyone to work together to create and establish a plan to grow this church for the future.

There are going to be some other challenges which we will all need to provide our input to make us stronger. We know that we will need to work to create a realistic budget, to establish some long-term goals and plans

concerning the maintenance of the building, there is a need to grow church school to have new families become a part of our community, and without a doubt we need to nurture individuals to become the future leaders of the church. All these items will require us to practice patience and tolerance as we work together. Churches are constantly needing to adapt so that we remain vital in people's lives as we compete with so many other activities for their time and financial support.

The church of today needs to change because society and people's priorities have changed over those past many years. We are still community and family, but people have so many other options available to them. We need to shift our thinking of how ministry is accomplished and by whom. As we work together in this new year, we need to begin a discussion about our vision, our hopes, and how we see ourselves accomplishing our plans. The pandemic has taught us valuable lessons about adapting, so we need to apply what we have learned to how we envision ourselves doing everything in the future. I and the council want to hear your thoughts and ideas as we look towards the future. In business they call the sharing of ideas as brainstorming, we need to share our ideas and start a trend towards faith-storming. I pray that each of you will participate in sharing as we position ourselves for the future. There will be hurdles and challenges we will encounter by the naysayers, by the resisters to change, and by those who have become complacent. I know that each and every one of you love and care deeply about this church, the traditions, and the history....I am asking you now to join with us in creating a plan to make this church the rock it was created to be in serving Fitchburg and the greater community.

Blessings as we embark on this journey to the revisioning of this our church!

Pastor Dave

Church & Pastoral Relations Committee

The Church & Pastoral Relations Committee met recently to evaluate the minister's and congregation's performance and to develop a formal procedure to evaluate their mutual performance during the upcoming years. Those taking part in the meeting included Eileen Berger, Beth Porell, Ruth Carpentier & Paul Stansel.

The consensus of the group is that the Minister has very effectively guided the congregation thru the difficult times we have experienced during the last 2 years. His leadership has kept the church alive during the pandemic. In addition he has been instrumental in bringing the church back toward "normal" operation during the last six months.

For the next meeting of the Church & Pastoral Relations Committee, we recommend that the membership be increased

temporarily for the purpose of setting goals and objectives for the church for next several years. This planning meeting should include the Minister and additional members representing the congregation. These goals will be re-evaluated by the Minister and the Church & Pastoral Relations Committee as necessary.

Based on the Minister's leadership during the recent difficult times it is the recommendation of the Church & Pastoral Relations Committee that his salary for the next year be increased by a minimum of 4.5%.

Respectfully submitted,

Eileen, Ruth, Beth, Paul



REMINDER



**Annual Meeting
Is
January 30th
Immediately following worship**

Bible Study

Our Bible Study is held on Wednesday mornings starting at 10:30. It is open to everyone to join us in a contemporary reading of the scriptures. We will discuss the Word of God as it applies to our world and lives today. Our discussions are intended to help each of us to see God in the world now and to help us deal with issues that surround us. Please be advised if there is a question about travel during the winter months, please check with Pastor Dave before heading out to Bible Study.



Topics are as follows for these dates:

January 5 – “Anchor Yourself in God’s Love” based on Matthew 3:1-17

January 12 – “Know That You Are Welcome” based on Psalm 139

January 19 – “You Are at Home While Still on the Way” based on John 14:1-4 and Philippians 4:4-7

January 26 – “All Is Clothed in Divine Light” based on Philippians 3:17-4:1

February 2 – “God Pitched His Tent Among Us” based on John 14:1-4, 18-27

COVID-19 PROTOCOLS



In our response to the ever-rising infection rate related to COVID-19 and the various variants that are in the area, the Deacon’s voted to re-institute the masking protocols for gatherings in the church building. They are requiring that masks be worn while in the building without regard to vaccination status. They further ask that unvaccinated individuals who choose to remain unvaccinated, refrain from entering our facility unless they cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons or for those who are not eligible to be vaccinated.

We further ask that we adhere to the social distancing recommendations that were previously used as our safety protocols. This will

require that the use of every other pew be observed and that we only have small numbers sitting at tables during fellowship.

We greatly appreciate your cooperation in keeping our entire congregation safe as we are the most highly at risk for multiple reasons. As things change, we will pass the information onto you for your consideration.

Thank you and please be safe!!!



EVENTS IN JANUARY

Date	Time	Event	Location
January 2	10:00 AM	Worship with Communion	Sanctuary
January 3	9:00 AM	Office Hours begin	Office
January 4	9:00 AM	Office Hours begin	Office
January 4	7:00 PM	Deacon's Meeting	on ZOOM
January 5	9:00 AM	Office Hours begin	Office
January 5	10:30 AM	Bible Study	Church Parlor
January 6	9:00 AM	Office Hours begin	Office
January 6	5:30 - 8:30 PM	Fitchburg Scouting	Cookman Hall
January 9	10:00 AM	Worship	Sanctuary
January 10	9:00 AM	Office Hours begin	Office
January 10	7:00 PM	Church Council Meeting	on ZOOM
January 11	11:00 AM	Office Hours beginOffice	Office
January 11	7:00 PM	Camp Wellville BOD	on ZOOM
January 12	9:00 AM	Office Hours begin	Office
January 12	10:30 AM	Bible Study	Church Parlor
January 13	9:00 AM	Office Hours begin	Office
January 13	5:30 - 8:30 PM	Fitchburg Scouting	Cookman Hall
January 16	10:00 AM	Worship	Sanctuary
January 16	Noon	ANNUAL REPORT DEADLINE	Office
January 17	9:00 AM	Office Hours begin	Office
January 17	11:00 AM	Office Hours begin	Office
January 17	7:00 PM	Trustees Meeting	on ZOOM
January 18	9:00 AM	Office Hours begin	Office
January 18	10:30 AM	Bible Study	Church Parlor
January 19	9:00 AM	Office Hours begin	Office
January 19	5:30 - 8:30 PM	Fitchburg Scouting	Cookman Hall
January 23	10:00 AM	Worship	Sanctuary
January 24	9:00 AM	Office Hours begin	Office
January 25	9:00 AM	Office Hours begin	Office
January 26	9:00 AM	Office Hours begin	Office
January 26	10:30 AM	Bible Study	Church Parlor
January 27	9:00 AM	Office Hours begin	Office
January 27	5:30 - 8:30 PM	Fitchburg Scouting	Cookman Hall
January 30	10:00 AM	Worship	Sanctuary
January 30	11:30 AM	ANNUAL MEETING	TBD
January 31	9:00 AM	Office Hours begin	Office

The Christmas Concert

On Sunday December 5th Rollstone hosted an organ concert of sacred Christmas music performed by Gavin Klein. A video of the concert is available on the church's website, www.Rollstone.org or on the Rollstone's YouTube Channel.

Gavin Klein

The featured artist is Gavin Klein who is an accomplished organist, pianist, and harpsichordist from Bolton. Gavin is currently a senior at Nashoba Regional High School. With a background in early music and keyboard studies since he was four, Gavin took on the organ



at the age of 12, and is currently an organ student of C. Henry Mason, director of music at Immaculate Conception Parish in Worcester. Among his accomplishments includes that he has performed at prestigious venues in both the US and Europe before reaching the age of 16. He is a member of both the American Guild of Organists, National Pastoral Association of Musicians, and the Organ Historical Society.

Gavin has served as organist to a number of congregations and currently serves as organist at Rollstone Congregational Church in Fitchburg. He also is the organist for the Sisters of St. Benedict Center (*MICM), in Still River, and he directs a Schola Cantorum at Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Parish in Gardner. In 2020, he was given the position of Artist-in-Residence at the Harvard Historical Society, in Harvard, where he regularly gives monthly

concerts. Gavin is also a Chorister at All Saints Episcopal Church in Worcester.

Gavin spends much of his free time composing sacred music. He is currently working on a Mass setting inspired by the works of Giovanni Palestrina, and has already written four different chorale works. Outside of music, Gavin enjoys to ski, go hiking, and spend time with his friends and family. Gavin is incredibly grateful for all the love and support people have shown him over the years, and is so thankful to Pastor David Hanks, and the Rollstone Congregation for their love, encouragement, and endless prayers.

Gavin's future plans are to attend college in the coming year with a concentration in organ performance. Upon his completion of his studies he will be looking to be named an Artist-in-Residence within a sacred setting.

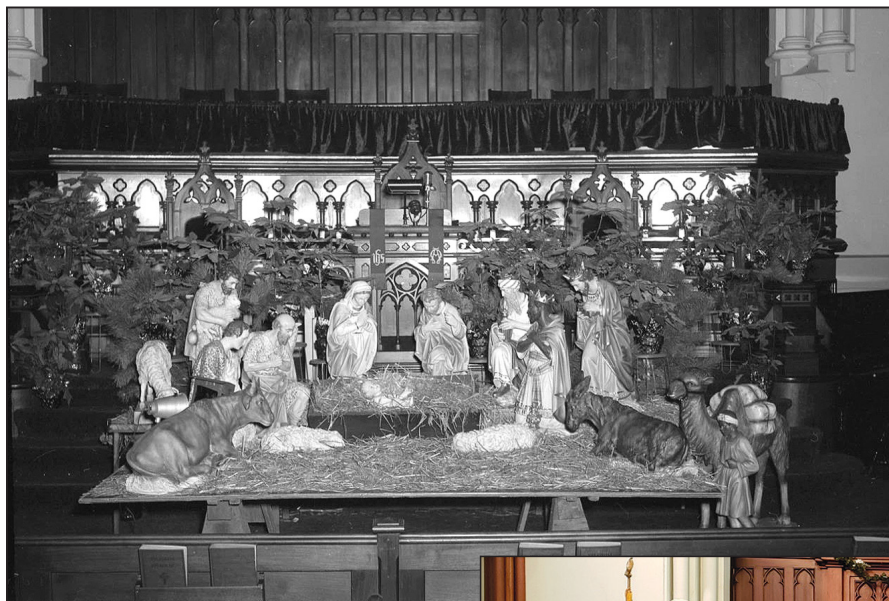


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Nativity Scenes at Rollstone Congregational Church



Nativity Scene at Rollstone Congregational Church circa 1940's. Note the large scale of the scene and the characters.

Photo by Llewellyn M. Rowe, Jr.
and courtesy of Kathy Rowe

Nativity Scene at Rollstone Congregational Church, December 2021.

Photo by Andy Lipasti



History of the Nativity Scene

Who created the first Nativity scene?

A famous Saint brought us this most beloved Christmas tradition.

There was a deacon in Italy in the 13th century who had a special love for the Child Jesus and he worked on a plan to inspire this same love in the townspeople. In the year 1223, in a cave near the town of Greccio, he set up a manger and brought a real ox and donkey to play their part. He invited the people to a midnight service at the cave, and they came, the forest ringing with song and bright with candlelight. After chanting the Gospel, the deacon preached a sermon about the Babe of Bethlehem. He kept the manger empty, since the Child had not arrived yet. But one man, a holy citizen and former soldier who was a friend of the deacon, said that he saw in the manger, a beautiful, radiant Child. He witnessed the deacon gathering this Child devoutly in his arms.

The deacon was none other than St. Francis of Assisi, and this is the story of the first Nativity scene, as related by St. Bonaventure in his biography of St. Francis. Bonaventure also relates that the hay from that first crèche was saved by

the townspeople in attendance and that it miraculously cured ailing cattle.

It's clear that nativity scenes had enormous popular appeal. St. Francis' display came in the middle of a period when mystery or miracle plays were a popular form of entertainment and education for European laypeople. These plays, originally performed in churches and later performed in town squares, re-enacted Bible stories in common languages. Since church services at the time were performed only in Latin, which virtually no one understood, miracle plays were the only way for laypeople to learn scripture. St. Francis nativity scene used the same method of visual display to help locals understand and emotionally engage with Christianity. When we put our Nativity sets out this Christmas, we are continuing a tradition that was started by Saint Francis nearly 800 years ago.

Church School News for January 2022 - Happy New Year!!

Is Christmas Really Over?



Theme: In Jesus, we receive the right to become children of God.

Scripture: Psalm 23:6 Kindness and love will be with us every day of our life and we will live forever in God's house.

As I hold up one of my gifts, there's one thing I've learned about Christmas gifts. No matter how much you enjoy receiving them, they just don't last forever.

There's one Christmas gift that's different. It never wears out or goes out of style. It's the true gift that Christmas is all about. **It's God's gift to us: His Son, Jesus.**

The Bible tells us that all who receive Jesus and believe in His name become the children of God! God will love us, protect us, and provide everything that we need. The best part is that it never ends. The Bible says that kindness and love

will be with us every day of our life and we will live forever in God's house. I enjoy giving and receiving gifts at Christmas, but I think it's important to remember the greatest gift of all was God's gift to us. It's the gift that keeps on giving!

Dear God, we thank You for loving us so much that You sent Your Son so we too can become Your children. Amen.

Our Trip to the Live Nativity on December 5th in Westminster was amazing.

The Piazza and Porell families met there and were happy to see a few members who joined us. Perhaps next year more folks can see the amazing job the Lutheran Church does on this event. (Photos below) **It is a time for those who attend to focus on the Real Story of Christmas!**

Keep Christmas in your heart all year long, Krista, Hal, and Beth



Adult Fellowship

— January —
No Activities in January

— February —
A Moment of Celebration
Saturday February 5th • 2:00 P.M.
Mechanics Hall in Worcester
Cost: TBD

Help us support the NSB's Fifth Anniversary as the featured soloist is Gavin Klein. He will be playing several pieces demonstrating his grace and mastery of the organ.



Come and Celebrate Chinese New Year
"Year of the Tiger"

Sunday February 6th • 2:00 P.M.
Cookman Hall | Cost: \$15 per person



A picture
of a homeless
couple with
their child
from over
2000
years ago.

A little humor



Who is God inviting me to welcome into my community?

“She’s not like us,” the woman said as we cleaned the church kitchen. Smiling, I turned to her and said, “And isn’t that great?” Unmoved, she walked away without replying.

When we truly open the doors of our churches and our hearts, we need to be ready for people who are “not like us.” If we greet them with acceptance, not just tolerance, we open ourselves to a variety of experiences. New people, different people, can lead to diversity in music, in dress, and maybe even in the menu for church luncheons.

Today, let’s look at each person we pass with open and loving eyes. Let’s step beyond tolerance into acceptance and learn to love others for their place in God’s plan.

Prayer: Dear God, give us open hearts, minds and eyes to see how beautiful our differences can be. Help us to trust your creativity.

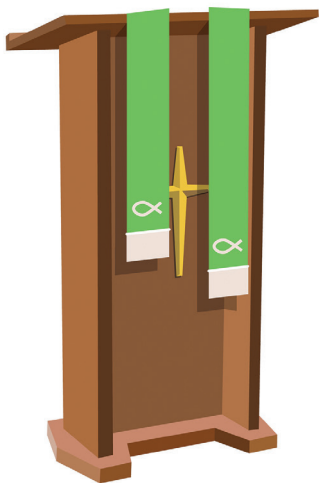
Amen.

Taken from The Upper Room.
November - December 2021 edition
by Kimberly Rice Smith

LITURGIST SCHEDULE of WORSHIP SERVICES

Liturgical Date	Liturgical Designation	Liturgist	Notes	Time
Sun, Jan 2, 22	2nd Sunday After Christmas	Kathy Rowe		10:00 AM
Sun, Jan 9, 22	1st Sunday After Epiphany	Jackie Reiss	Baptism of Christ	10:00 AM
Sun, Jan 16, 22	2nd Sunday After Epiphany	Jean Suomala	MLK Jr. Sunday	10:00 AM
Sun, Jan 23, 22	3rd Sunday After Epiphany	Lois Schrader		10:00 AM
Sun, Jan 30, 22	4th Sunday After Epiphany	Amy Larsen		10:00 AM
Sun, Feb 6, 22	5th Sunday After Epiphany	Kathy Rowe		10:00 AM
Sun, Feb 13, 22	6th Sunday After Epiphany	Linda Haas		10:00 AM
Sun, Feb 20, 22	7th Sunday After Epiphany	Amy Larsen		10:00 AM
Sun, Feb 27, 22	Transfiguration Sunday	Ron Smith		10:00 AM
Sun, Mar 6, 22	1st Sunday in Lent	Andy Lipasti		10:00 AM
Sun, Mar 13, 22	2nd Sunday in Lent	Jean Suomala		10:00 AM
Sun, Mar 20, 22	3rd Sunday in Lent	Lois Schrader		10:00 AM
Sun, Mar 27, 22	4th Sunday in Lent	Kathy Rowe		10:00 AM
Sun, Apr 3, 22	5th Sunday in Lent	Janet Lane		10:00 AM
Sun, Apr 10, 22	6th Sunday in Lent	Marie Stansel	Palm Sunday	10:00 AM
Thu, Apr 14, 22	Maundy Thursday	Deacons		6:00 P.M.
Sun, Apr 17, 22	Easter Sunday	Andy Lipasti		10:00 AM

*Thank you for your
time and service.*



Happy Birthday

Best Wishes To You All!

Birthdays in January

12 Jasmine Paine

20 Eli Brassard

24 Lois Schrader

24 Vikki Police

28 Aurelia Lyman



Christmas Flower Memoriam

In Memory or Honor of

*Vincenza and Aldo Baggio
Robert Beaulac
The Berger Family
Betty and Charles Chicknavorian
Smith, Capone, & Colwell Loved Ones
Henry & Ruth Cutting, Dorothy Cutting
Dempster Family – Parents and Sister
Arline Finch
Kevin “Fitz” Fitzgerald
Hazel and Robert Hurd
Burton Lashua Jr.
Sulo and Lempi Lipasti
Harold Joseph Michaud
Fred Miller
Rebecca (Rowe) Pandiscio
Our Parents
Joseph and Lauraine Pilesky
Beatrice Porell
Roger S. Reiss
Dorothy and Llewellyn Rowe, Jr.
Ralph and Agnes Sammet
Walter and Norma Schrader
Lydia and Stephen Smith
Marjorie Smith
Phyllis and Harold Smith
Burton and Natale Valiton*

Donor

Ron and Mary Anne Smith
Beaulac and Bourque Families
Jay and Eileen Berger
Hal Smith and Family
Becky, Beth, Emma, and Ellen
George and Dianne Sammet
Barbara Berry
Carleton “Zeke” Finch
Mary Lyman and Family
Hal Smith and Family
Jean Suomala
Andrew Lipasti
Lorraine Michaud
Judy Miller
Kathy Rowe
Paul and Marie Stansel
Mary Lyman and Family
Beth, Emma, and Ellen Porell
Jackie Reiss
Kathy Rowe
George and Dianne Sammet
Lois Schrader
Hal Smith and Family
Ron and Mary Anne Smith
Hal Smith and Family
Elaine Carroll

***Thank you to everyone who made donations for the
Christmas flowers to decorate the Sanctuary.***

Christmas Blessings to Everyone.

ROLLSTONE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
199 MAIN STREET
FITCHBURG, MA 01420