

From the Pastor's Desk...

BY PASTOR SEAN

SERMON: "Bounty" (Scripture: Psalm 65)

Will you pray with me? God, hear our praise – hear our love for You, our joy for the bounty you have given us. God, hear us again: grant us the strength and faith to share Your bounty with all those made in Your image. Amen.

My friends, I come to you with an interesting dilemma: the dilemma of the lectionary. I've spoken to some of you about this before, but many of you might not know: most mainline Protestant pastors draw the scripture used each week from a resource called the lectionary, which is basically a calendar of scripture: every calendar day has at least one attributed scripture lesson, often more than one. I admit that I tend to pay the most attention to Sundays. The intent of the lectionary is to help churches and pastors 'work through' the entire Bible in a three-year period, week to week and day to day. It's convenient, and it helps pastors with what we're worst at: scheduling.

From my perspective, the lectionary can be a funny thing; sometimes, it's even an uncomfortable thing. You see, the lectionary doesn't care about current events: those who coordinate it do so years in advance. As a result, the scripture for any given day can be completely detached from current events – completely irrelevant for the needs and life of any one specific church. Other times, and I find these times to be more common, the lectionary selection can be so close to current events, so strangely referential to what's going on outside the church. And while that can be good, it can also be uncomfortable.

Because certain passages of scripture are so close to 'real-world' issues, many pastors have to gauge whether we'll risk preaching the Word for the reaction we'll receive. Nobody wants to fly too close to the wrong sun, lest we get a flood of emails, or turn off a first-time visitor, or provoke a long-time congregant – even when it's our job to preach an inconvenient gospel.

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- Rick Stelle, Moderator
- Ruth Mills, Clerk
- Jean Meo, Financial Clerk
- Margaret Hanoian, Treasurer

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- Sean Amato, Minister
- Donna Myers, Administrator
- Joseph Godfrey, Music Director
- Jill Boday, Handbell Choir
- Patricia Renaud, Organist
- Hope Paul, Nursery Attendant
- Romeo Mendes, Sexton

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- Michell Eskeli, Diaconate
- Jim Robshaw, Hospitality
- Bob Meo, Stewardship
- Martha Hunt, Music
- Rick Stelle, Property
- Terri DeBoise, Missions
- Mary Stelle, Christian Ed
- Bob Meo, Fundraising, Projects

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- Marilyn Briggs
- Marsha Brodeur
- Richard Brodeur
- Ann Colton
- Sandy Gamache
- Martha Hunt
- Darlene Magaw
- April McAllister
- Jim Robshaw
- Stephen Wowk

From the Pastor’s Desk ... (Cont.)

Based on the statistics I’ve read this year, one of the major sources of conflict facing American churches in 2025 is what’s called ‘sermon anxiety,’ and it manifests in two very real ways: anxiety on the part of the pastor to not rock the boat with their preaching, and anxiety on the part of the congregation that their pastor preaches in a way that complements their beliefs. This year, conflict at local churches in New England has increased when compared to 2024 - and this matter of disjointed values seems to be a primary source of that conflict. And this issue goes well-beyond New England, into churches across the country: Catholic, Mormon, Jehovah’s Witness, Missouri Synod, the Church of Jesus Christ with Signs Following. It is everywhere. This is a real and widespread disconnect.

I’ll use a real-world example to illustrate. Is anyone here familiar with Russell Moore? Russell Moore is the current editor-in-chief of Christianity Today, a popular magazine founded by evangelical icon Billy Graham in the 1950’s. He was a dean of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and the chief of the Southern Baptist Convention’s public policy and political arm. He’s a red-blooded conservative Christian, through and through. When asked about whether pastors in his neck of the woods were catching heat at the pulpit, he responded that he believed Christianity was in crisis – and when asked why, he responded that his perspective was drawn from, and I quote:

“...the result of having multiple pastors tell [him], essentially, the story of the Sermon on the Mount, parenthetically, in their own preaching – “turn the other cheek” – and to have someone come up after to say, “Where did you get those liberal talking points?” And what alarming to him, Moore] is that in most of these scenarios, when the pastor would say, “I’m literally quoting Jesus Christ,” the response would not be, “I apologize.” The response would be, “Yes, but that doesn’t work anymore. That’s weak.” And when we get to the point where the teachings of Jesus himself are seen as subversive to us, then we’re in a crisis.”

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From the Pastor's Desk ... (Cont.)

When it comes to communities like ours, which our denomination flails between calling a “purple church,” a politically-diverse traditional church, or a church “in the lion’s den” – I’ve heard all those phrases used to describe churches like ours – this matter becomes magnified. Sometimes, pastors tread where they shouldn’t; sometimes, they don’t tread anywhere. Pastors often end up couching our God-given lances so as to not poke or prod, because the people we’d be poking or prodding are our friends, our family, you – the people in the pews who we so grow to love. And yet, with all these complexities in mind, the lectionary drags us forward – drags us through an inconvenient scriptural minefield every Sunday morning.

I’d ask you to keep all this in mind, as the lectionary brings us to a scripture passage with unusual timing: Psalm 65. Psalm 65 is a psalm of bounty – and not just bounty, but beneficence: a grand and divine generosity, bestowed by the same graceful God the psalmist shares with you and me. The psalmist hails their God, our God, as one of great power and love: they praise God’s ordering of our world and the place within it that has been established for us, marked by awesome signs God leaves in our midst. Signs like those left by a gardener, tending to their land with minute care: signs like the bursting beauty of the pastures and the forests, signs like verdant hills and lush valleys replete with food to fill the belly and a divine craftsmanship that only serves the soul. Seasons of prosperity, crowned with glory; years gilded with riches, all meant for the benefit and stewardship of the people of God.

When I read this psalm, I can’t help but think of harvest time – a time of great stress and anticipation for so many people, a time where a community’s survival is made plain or slips away.

Harvest time is a special time for so many generations of Christians as they hoped to gather enough of their fruits to survive until the next gentle season. And yet, as a Christian, I find myself discomfited when I read this passage. Especially today.

The psalmist’s description of bounty – of overflowing rivers, great fields of grain, of celebrated joy after God’s deliverance from hardship – it just isn’t necessarily what I see or feel out in the world. It isn’t what I see or feel, and I say this with some anxiety in my heart, amongst my family and friends – people who should not be scraping by and hustling to survive, but are. It isn’t reflected in a world where children and adults, your mothers and your fathers and your sisters and your brothers, where their hunger and well-being is used as a political football. It isn’t reflected in the forty calls I’ve gotten to my cellphone this week from folks in town regarding food aid and SNAP benefits, as our people and nation lurch toward one of humanity’s grossest spectacles: hunger wielded like a political weapon – hunger hovering over mothers and children, justified by depraved and pathetic partisanship. Hunger, inflicted upon people you know and you love, by people who will never go hungry.

During this harvest time, we should be rejoicing and preparing for winter; battening the hatches, warming ourselves together. Instead, some of the people I love most are afraid of not having enough food. And that’s wrong. It’s not just wrong: it’s evil. It is evil to inflict hunger on people. It was evil when it happened to the Israelites in our scripture, and God made that plain; it was evil when it happened to the Ukrainians during the Holodomor, when it happened to Jews in the Polish Ghettos, when it was inflicted upon innocents in Gaza. Hunger is an evil weapon to use, and my Christianity – my Christ! – tells me that I must say so. It is the Christian thing to do. And if you find yourself equivocating, or hand-waving, or getting mealy-mouthed about your neighbors going hungry: sometimes, listening to a sermon is like looking in a mirror.

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From the Pastor’s Desk ... (Cont.)

If your eyes itch reading this, or if you’re stumbling toward excuses as to why this is somehow acceptable: I advise you look deep into that mirror. I say this as a Christian, I say this as your pastor. It’s wrong. It’s not just wrong, but evil. It is evil, and I’m not willing to sacrifice my Christianity, my ethics, my morals, to pretend otherwise, or to remain quiet. And I give you permission, my friends, to call this out. And I feel the need to say this, explicitly, because many of you have approached me with the same concerns; many of you have been struggling to manifest your faith in this world, to claim your faith when that faith seems accessory to cruelty. It need not be this way, my friends.

Lord, help us to be Christians – strong-voiced, clear-hearted, and true to the lessons of our Jesus. And to start, that means making sure our kin are fed. That’s prophetic; that’s honest; that’s Christian. So let’s walk the walk, friends. Amen.

Moderator’s Moment

BY RICK STELLE

I love our Church. I love our sanctuary and the history of our Church. I love our church family. I love their welcomes, handshakes, hugs, smiles, support and sincerity. I love their commitment to our church and the direction they continue to lead us in. I love our coffee hour, especially the brownies (without nuts please). I love everyone who gives their time and gifts to make our church beautiful, safe and full of joy. I love the music and the gifted people who work so hard to fill our church with joyful noise. I love hearing babies making their own joyful noise during our service. I love the people who care for and teach our children. I love the laughter and yes even the tears. I love that, in these troubled times, our church is a place where people can feel safe, if only for a short time.

We have been blessed in finding our new music director, Joe Godfrey. Thank you to the people who worked so hard to make this happen. Joe adds so much to our service, who can forget the Charlie Brown theme and the smiles on our faces as we walked into coffee hour on Apple Sunday. With Joe we have a happy, healthy choir that you should consider joining. Let’s not forget our bell choir and their director Jill Boday. It is such a joy to hear them when they perform during our services.

One of the things I love the most is the time we share during Joys and Concerns along with the power of our Pastor’s prayers after each one. You can feel the emotions when someone stands and makes a request. I watch as people reach out and place a comforting hand on someone having a hard time. I listen as so many people ask “Is there anything we can do to help? I love, no matter how long it takes, that everyone is given the opportunity for prayers, it is such an important and powerful part of the service.

On November 1st I will be replacing Gretchen Westhoven as the new Moderator. Sadly, she is moving and stepping down as moderator. She leaves big shoes to fill, and I will do my best to fill them. As your new moderator I want to help you love this church and its family as much as I do. If I can help you may contact me at rstelllesc@gmail.com.

N. Smithfield Food Pantry November

For the month of
November Food Pantry
hours are:

Tuesday 11/18 @ 5:30pm
Saturday 11/22 @ 10:00am
Tuesday 11/25 @ 5:30pm

(Only 1 Saturday this
month)

This month we are asking
for donations of baked
beans, canned pasta and
canned chicken or tuna.





Christian Ed Update

BY MARY STELLE

The Christian Education Committee is excited to share our plans for November. On November 1st, we held our Sensory Friendly Service at 5 pm. This is a shorter, quieter service lasting about 30 minutes followed by a light meal.

On November 2, the Sunday School students decorated and wrote letters of thanks to our veterans. On November 9, the students will be delivering these letters of appreciation to veterans in our congregation during the service. We are hoping to see many of our veterans during service on November 9. 😊

Our lessons for the rest of the month will be on thankfulness. On November 30, the first day of Advent, the students will meet the Wise Men. The children will be encouraged to write letters asking the Wise Men questions or writing letters to the baby Jesus. The Wise Men will take the letters, bringing their replies when they return on Epiphany in January. Also on November 30, the children will receive Advent calendars to help them count the days until Christmas.

Outreach and Action Committee

BY BONNIE DROLET

Good News! The Open and Affirming Group has been approved by the Church Council to proceed as a new Committee! The new Committee name, as voted by group members, is the Outreach and Action Committee. Our next step will include being put on the Annual Meeting agenda in January 2026 for church members to vote to approve our Committee. Meanwhile, we will be writing a mission statement and other requirements as listed in our church by-laws. We look forward to supporting ALL people, including groups listed in our Open and Affirming section of our church Covenant!

Currently, we are supporting our ongoing efforts for welcoming ALL, including our Sensory Friendly Services and Sanctuary Sounds events. If you have questions or would like to join our group, please see Bonnie Drolet or Jim Robshaw. The next meeting is November 9th. More news to come...

Adopt a Family

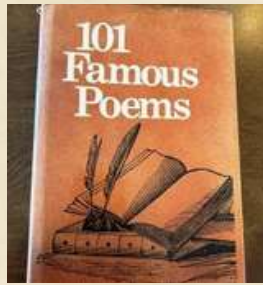
BY TERI DEBOISE

As we approach the winter holidays, it is time for our Annual Adopt-A-Family gift drive!

Slatersville Congregational Church will be supporting 3 families in the community this year. Please help us out by selecting a gift request slip during Coffee Hour on November 16. After you have made your purchase, please wrap your gift and TAPE THE SLIP to the bottom of the wrapped package. Return your gift on or before Sunday, December 7th. Help to make a family's Christmas special and one to remember!

101 Famous Poems

A Memoir by Ruth Mills



My Uncle Bill's belongings were shipped to my grandparents' home in Philadelphia months after they received that fateful telegram. An army-green trunk with a few clothing items and a leather-bound poetry book were among the few personal items they received. When you are a pilot living on an aircraft carrier during World War II, space is limited.

"This might fit you. Try it on," my grandmother urged her younger son Walt.

Uncle Walt, recently home from the war himself, slipped into the jacket and found that it fit quite well. His hands instinctively found their way into the pockets. He turned pale as his fingers encountered change, obviously left there by his older brother Bill. Reality hit. He quickly removed the jacket and wanted nothing more to do with it.

My mother ended up with the trunk and the poetry book. I now have the trunk at the foot of my bed. My older brother, Uncle Bill's namesake, has what is left of the poetry book, 101 Famous Poems.

My sisters and I have sometimes expressed disappointment at what happened to that book. My mother shared it with us and we cherished it. We loved to read its poems aloud. We loved to finger the embossed letters on the cover. We loved that it had belonged to a heroic uncle we would never meet. Even when we were quite young, we had unlimited access to it. The cover cracked, and then fell off. Pages got ripped.

Sometime during the 1980's I found that a revised edition of the book was still in print. I grabbed it. I am not sure what was revised about it. Everything looked the same except it had a conventional hardcover, no leather.

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During my mother's last years, as she slipped into the haze of dementia, I found poetry was a way of connecting with her. She lived about eight hours to the north, so my main contact was by phone. She repeated herself constantly throughout our conversations. Dad had died in January 2005, and during the following months it became obvious how much he had covered for her. She was more confused than we had thought.

My father's burial had been scheduled for the end of May once the Canadian soil, where he was to be buried, had thawed. During the preceding months, Mom was trying to think of what she wanted said at the graveside. She kept saying something about footsteps and sands of time. It was ringing a dim bell somewhere deep in my memory banks. I pulled out my copy of 101 Famous Poems and found it quickly: Longfellow's "A Psalm of Life." I read it to her and she quoted parts of it from memory with me as I read. A few months later it was read at Dad's gravesite.

Phone calls to Mom became more and more difficult. Again I turned to poetry for help and found that the book was still in print in 2006. Amazon had inexpensive copies that were made to look like leather, and even had place-marking ribbons. I bought several copies, sent one to Mom, and several to various siblings who might enjoy reading poems with her. Our phone conversations became enjoyable as we read favorites aloud to each other. How she loved Longfellow! Eventually Mom became less verbal but she would listen intently when we read to her.

I still pull that book out every so often and have dramatic readings for my cats. Most of them have ignored me, but one would get quite emotional regardless of the sentiment expressed in the poem.

I have begun to reevaluate our treatment of that leather-bound book. True, as an artifact of its time, I would love to see it intact, as beautiful as it once was. But perhaps, a generation of poetry lovers left in its wake is a living legacy. Uncle Bill might be proud!

Excerpt from A Psalm of Life

*Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.
Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.
Let us then be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.*

~Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Mental Health Moment

BY JAN GOODRICH

(Jan was a Psychiatric Registered Nurse and group leader who taught mental health skills for daily life.)

I would like to review last month's Mental Health Moment and start a running list of the skills that you can use in your daily lives.

In every example of anxiety:

1. Recognize your physical symptoms. They may include muscle tension, shallow breathing, shakiness, nausea, headache, etc.

2. Anxiety blocks insight. It is very difficult to think when you are having physical symptoms of anxiety.

Here is what you can do:

3. Take deep breaths. This will allow your brain to increase your oxygen level and allow you to think.

4. Command your muscles to relax, or

5. Move your muscles and find a distraction. The muscles do not control the brain. The brain controls our muscles!

6. Stop Processing. Processing is when you go over and over something in your mind. In last month's example, I was processing about some mistakes I made, so I was unable to concentrate on other things that I was trying to do. That made me get into a cycle of making more mistakes and processing that was difficult to get out of.



7. Strive for averageness. We are all just average people. No one is perfect. Striving for perfection is unattainable, so it lowers our self esteem because we can never accomplish it.

8. Have the courage to make mistakes. We all make mistakes every day, so bring them on!

9. Have the willingness to bear life's discomforts. The more we are willing to bear the discomforts of our mistakes, the better mental health we will have!

10. Endorse yourself. Always, always, always, say, "Good for me!" whenever you use these skills. This is essential to sound mental health!

The very definition of mental health is: 'Feeling good about having the willingness to bear life's discomforts'.

In just one short example, we learned ten M.H. skills. Strive for averageness when you use them. Even using just a few skills changed my day from a very negative one into a very positive one. I saw a woman go from being afraid to go out of her house for 20 years to getting a job and becoming supervisor of New England in her company. Try these skills and they can change your life!

Want to help our North Smithfield Food Pantry?

BY DARLENE MAGAW

Want to help our North Smithfield residents who use the food pantry? Here's how...

Donate food. We're gearing up for holiday baskets and we need canned fruit and veggies, boxed stuffing and potatoes, cranberry sauce and gravy. Bring items to food pantry or drop off at the community chest just outside our fellowship space, Globe Hall.

Donate time. We're open 4 times per month... the last 2 Tuesdays at 5:30 and the to last 2 Saturdays at 10. We can always use extra help with carrying full shopping bags up the basement stairs for our customers.

Donate money. Checks can be sent to North Smithfield Food Pantry, PO Box 283, Slatersville RI 02876.

Pray for our customers and volunteers as they face uncertainties and worries in the months ahead. Tell your elected representatives to use their energies for good...hunger isn't a political game piece.

Low-Income Home Energy Assistance

BY TERI DEBOISE

Low-Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) is accepting applications. Organizations began accepting applications for heating assistance on October 1. If you need help with your heating costs, you might be eligible to apply. The agencies that accept applications for the programs can provide you with information on this year's income guidelines.

Tri-County Community Action Agency (401-519-1913, www.tricountyri.org) accepts applications from Johnston, No. Providence, Smithfield, Glocester and Burrillville.

Blackstone Valley Community Action (401-723-4520, bvcap.org) accepts applications from Woonsocket, North Smithfield, Pawtucket, Central Falls, Lincoln and Cumberland.

In Massachusetts, contact your local Community Action Agency or Senior Center for applications and information.

Missions Moment

BY ALISON PEIRCE

With so many disasters around the world and in the United States, Missions voted to give \$250 to Direct Relief, a humanitarian organization that has worked since 1948 to help people who confront enormous hardship to recover from disasters and improve the quality of their lives. Direct Relief has helped locally-run healthcare facilities and projects by supplying them with specifically requested and appropriate pharmaceuticals, supplies, nutritional supplements, and medical equipment. For instance, after the recent flooding in Alaska, Direct Relief has been shipping medical aid to the state to support evacuees and others impacted by the storms. On a worldwide basis, Direct Relief has deployed more than 2,900 tons of medical aid, \$55 million in financial assistance, and \$2 billion in material aid assistance to Ukraine since the war broke out. These are only two examples of the many ways in which Direct Relief helps the most vulnerable communities prepare and respond to emergencies.

In honor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, an additional \$250 was given to The Susan G. Komen Foundation, which provides education, support, and resources, including financial assistance, for patients and caregivers. About one in eight women in the U.S. will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime. No matter who you are or where you live, breast cancer may touch your life. The Susan G. Komen foundation's mission is to save lives by meeting the most critical needs in our communities and investing in breakthrough research to prevent and cure breast cancer.

Lastly, we want to give a big shout out of thanks to everyone who donated items for our Blessing Bag event taking place on October 26th. We asked and you gave! Because of your generosity, we will be able to package 50 bags for those in need in our community.

From Mathewson Street Church

Our Friends at Mathewson Street Church wanted to remind us of their ongoing Clothing Drive. This time of year, hats, glove and jackets are particularly needed. Please reach out to Helen Lupu to coordinate getting the donations to Mathewson Street Church for their Ministry to the un-housed.

Handbell Choir News

BY JILL BODAY

On the Common Ringers are happy to welcome our two newest ringers, Lisa and Rick! The Handbell Choir has been busy learning music and performing during worship services. We have been playing about once per month. Our smaller group has also started rehearsing and will play during the November 9 Sunday service. The full choir will be traveling to Mathewson St. Church in Providence on November 16. We look forward to sharing our music with their congregation!

The Community Handbell Choir has also been rehearsing two times a month. We have our first gig during December at a yacht club in Jamestown! We are excited to present our very first performance! More details to come.

We are also very excited to host The New England Ringers during our Sanctuary Sounds performance series! This concert will take place on Saturday, November 29 at 7pm right in our sanctuary! The New England Ringers are an advanced community ringing ensemble based out of Oxford, MA. They will present a holiday style concert. Hope to see you there!

Commitment Campaign Update

BY JEAN MEO

The Campaign Committee has been working for weeks to share information with you during worship services and to put together all the information you will need to thoughtfully and prayerfully think about your faith and your financial support for our church, not only for the present but also for the future. The pledge packets are ready for distribution! The packet contains a cover letter explaining the necessity of a combined Stewardship and Capital Campaign, a list of the projects that the congregation has prioritized along with their estimated costs, a sheet of Frequently Asked Questions, and a pledge card. This packet is being given to all who have previously pledged as well as those who have contributed to the collection plate on a regular basis. You do NOT need to be a member to pledge! If you did not receive a packet or if you have any questions, please see Margaret Hanoian (Treasurer), Jean Meo (Financial Secretary), or Bob Meo (Stewardship Chair). We would appreciate the return of the pledge cards by Thankful Sunday, November 23rd, in order to develop the budget for 2026 in a timely manner. We thank you for your support and your commitment to the present and the future of our church.

Sanctuary Sounds

BY ANN COLTON

November 29th – New England Ringers

Join us for a festive evening in our sanctuary, where you'll enjoy an engaging mix of bells, chimes, and mallets to start the holiday season. This promises to be an experience you won't forget.

If you have family or friends visiting for Thanksgiving, bring them to this very special performance. They will sing (or ring) your praises. The New England Ringers are a distinguished handbell ensemble who deliver a skillful performance featuring a varied repertoire of traditional and contemporary works.

As a reminder, we can always use help for this event – set up, event staff and clean up. Sign up sheets will be in Globe Hall.

If you'd like to attend but have transportation issues or do not drive after dark, please let us know and we will try to assist.

Tickets: \$20.00

December 13 – The Heart Beats

A 13-member a cappella group from Worcester will perform holiday classics and popular tunes. Tickets: \$10.

Stephen's Ministry Training

We are going to start Stephen's Ministry Training in January. It will be live training at the church. More details will follow. Be sure to sign up to receive forthcoming communications about the upcoming training. Sign up Sheet is in Globe Hall!

E. Blackstone Quaker Meeting House

The East Blackstone Quaker Meeting House is having their Thanksgiving Service on Sunday November 23 at 2pm. All are invited.

Advent Season at SCC

Calendar of Events

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- Sunday, November 16th Adopt a Family (for Christmas) Ticket Pick Up
- Saturday, November 29th New England Ringers - Sanctuary Sounds @ 7pm
- Sunday, November 30th
(1st Day of Advent) Coffee & Cocoa with the Wisemen
(During Coffee Hour)
- Saturday, December 6th Scout Troop 438 Holiday Craft Fair
(10am-3pm)
Christmas Sensory Sensitive Service @ 5pm
- Sunday, December 7th
(2nd Sunday of Advent) Hanging of the Greens (during Service)
Adopt a Family (Drop off Wrapped Gifts)
- Saturday, December 13th The Heartbeats - Holiday Classics
(Sanctuary Sounds)
- Sunday, December 14th
(3rd Sunday of Advent) Handbell Choir & Children's Christmas Pageant
Mitten Tree
N. Smithfield High School Holiday Concert @ 5pm
- Sunday, December 21st
(4th Sunday of Advent) Christmas Cantata - Adult Christmas Pageant
- Wednesday, December 24th Christmas Eve Service - @5pm (Family Service)
with Luminaries on the Common
- Wednesday, December 24th Potluck Meal between Services
- Wednesday, December 24th Christmas Eve Service @ 11pm
(Candlelight Service)