



FOR THE **BEGINNING**

— HOPE IS WORTH THE RISK —



4th Sunday in Advent

12/22 @ 10am, on-site & online

Connect at www.NeedhamUCC.org

The Congregational Church of Needham, *United Church of Christ*

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Rev. John Gage, *senior minister*
Valerie Becker, *director of music*
Robin Bevilacqua, *church administrator*
Cindy Sullivan, *financial administrator*
Tom Mollerus, *moderator*
Pastor-Parish Relations Committee

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Welcome! *No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are invited and welcome here at The Congregational Church of Needham, United Church of Christ.*

Please take a moment to let us know you're here, whether you are an official church member, a frequent guest, or a first-timer. **Scan this QR code with the camera on your phone and follow the link to sign-in.** *There's a paper sign-in sheet in the foyer, if you prefer.*

Children of all ages are always welcome in worship! Quiet books and pew pals (soft toys) are available in the foyer outside the sanctuary doors. Our **nursery space is available downstairs**; please note that parents/caregivers must remain with their children in the nursery. Use the door to the left of the pulpit to head downstairs and into the first classroom on the left. A screen is available so that parents can continue to participate in the worship service from the nursery. All bathrooms have **changing tables**. **Pre-K children** who are potty trained are welcome to join our elementary Sunday school activities. **Sunday School is usually offered on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month**, unless otherwise announced.

There is Sunday school this Sunday. Children will be invited to follow their teachers downstairs to the classroom following the Time Especially for Children. **(Our next Sunday School Sundays will be 1/12 & 1/26.)**

December 22, 2024

What's to love?/ she asked./ I understood the question./ I've seen the riot gear,/ the tear gas,/ the names of children/ wiped from this/ war-stained world./ I've seen the spray paint Swastikas,/ and the Proud Boy with their

flags./ I've heard grandmothers at church/ pray in urgent, desperate
whispers./ And I've watched young mothers cry,/ because teachers carry
guns./ I've felt the tremor of an earthquake./ I've felt the heat of climate
change./ I've seen the temple curtain tear in two./ But despite it all,/ the
bell that wouldn't stop tolling,/ the words that won't stop clanging through
my heart,/ are, *so much*./ There is so much left to love. So much left to
hope for.

“Despite It All” by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed

CAROLS Hark! the Herald Angels Sing (NCH #144, v1, 3)
The First Noel (NCH #139, v1-2)

CHORAL INTROIT *Sussex Carol*, arr. Elaine Hagenberg Chancel Choir

On Christmas night all Christians sing, to hear the news the angels bring
On Christmas night all Christians sing, to hear the news the angels bring
News of great joy, news of great mirth, News of our merciful King's birth

Then why should men on earth be so sad, since our Redeemer made us
glad

Then why should men on earth be so sad, since our Redeemer made us
glad

When from our sin He set us free, all for to gain our liberty

When sin departs, then life and health come in its place
When sin departs before His grace, then life and health come in its place
Angels and men with joy may sing, all for to see the newborn King,
All out of darkness we have light, which made the angels sing this night
Glory to God and peace to men, now and forever more, Amen.

WELCOME

Rev. John MacIver Gage

LIGHTING CANDLES FOR ADVENT: *Love*

One: In a weary and worn world, how do we begin again? Where do
we start?

Many: Let us begin with tenderness. Let us begin with our hearts on our sleeve. Let us begin from a place of vulnerability and hope. Let us begin again with love.

One: Yes, let us begin with love. Today we light the candles of hope, peace, joy, and love.

Many: May the warmth of these lights be our cornerstone. May the truth in these lights help us begin again.

Many: May it be so. Amen!

HYMN

My Soul Gives Glory to My God
(see below)

READING FROM SCRIPTURE *from the Gospels:* Matthew 1:18-25

TIME ESPECIALLY FOR CHILDREN

SERMON

Hope is Worth the Risk Rev. John MacIver Gage

HYMN

Faith Begins by Letting Go (see below)

SHARING OUR PRAYERS (“O God, hear our prayer”)

THE LORD’S PRAYER *(using these or whichever words are closest to your own heart)*

Our Father/Mother in heaven, holy is your name. Your reign come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kin-dom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

ANTHEM

Joy to the World, arr. L. Larson
Friendly Chimers

PARTNERING IN THE GOOD NEWS

SINGING OUR THANKS & PRAISE

Mary Luti

**Praise Love who watches through the night,
announcing hope at dawn's first light,
who gives instead of mourning tears
the joy of all our longing years.**

BLESSING & POSTLUDE

CHURCH ACTIVITIES & ANNOUNCEMENTS: December 22, 2024

We *always* need Sunday School volunteers. Info?

childrenandyouth@needhamucc.org Sign up?

<https://shorturl.at/UaLJk>



No-Stress Christmas Pageant

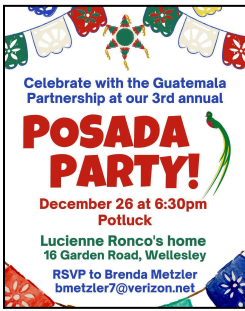
Christmas Eve, 12/24 @ 4pm, on-site & online via Zoom at

<http://zoom.us/j/907548568>

A Christmas Pageant with NO LINES! NO REHEARSALS! and NO STRESS! Any child who shows up on the night can pick a costume to be a shepherd, angel, or magi in our pageant and share the story of God's love born among us in Jesus.

Arrive a few minutes before 4pm and we'll have the costumes and props all laid out and volunteers ready to help you find the right one. Sit together as a family until your child's part in the story is mentioned, then they'll go forward to join the action (and you can go with them, if you like). Plus, lots and lots and lots of familiar Christmas carols and special surprises.

THE CHURCH OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED FOR THE HOLIDAYS FROM CHRISTMAS DAY THROUGH NEW YEAR'S DAY



Guatemala Partnership Christmas/Posada Party

Thursday, 12/26 @ 6:30pm, 16 Garden Rd, Wellesley, MA

The Guatemala Partnership joyfully invites you to our third annual Christmas/Posada Party Potluck on Thursday, 12/26 at 6:30 pm at Lucienne Ronco's home, 16 Garden Rd., Wellesley, MA. Please RSVP to Brenda Metzler to let us know that you'll join us: **bmetzler7@verizon.net**.



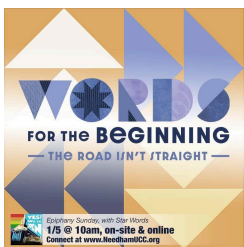
Worship for 5 Golden Rings Sunday

12/29, ONLINE-ONLY, available anytime via YouTube

Connect at www.NeedhamUCC.org

No matter where you are on life's journey, you can continue the Christmas season with the help of this online worship service available for you to download anytime via Youtube.

The link will be sent via email and published on our website.



Coming Up

The Road Isn't Straight

Epiphany Sunday, 1/5 @ 10am, on-site & online via

Zoom at <http://zoom.us/j/907548568>

As poet Robert Burns warned, "The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry." The same goes for magi. Those "wise ones" had the best intentions when they set out to find the "newborn king" the stars had told them about. But even so, they managed to get tangled up with the wrong kind of people along the way, like murderous King Herod. Happens to the best of us. So they had to change their minds and adapt their plans to the new winding road before them and make their way home by another way. *This service will include an opportunity to pick a **star word** to accompany you into the new year.*



Mindful Meditation ONLINE

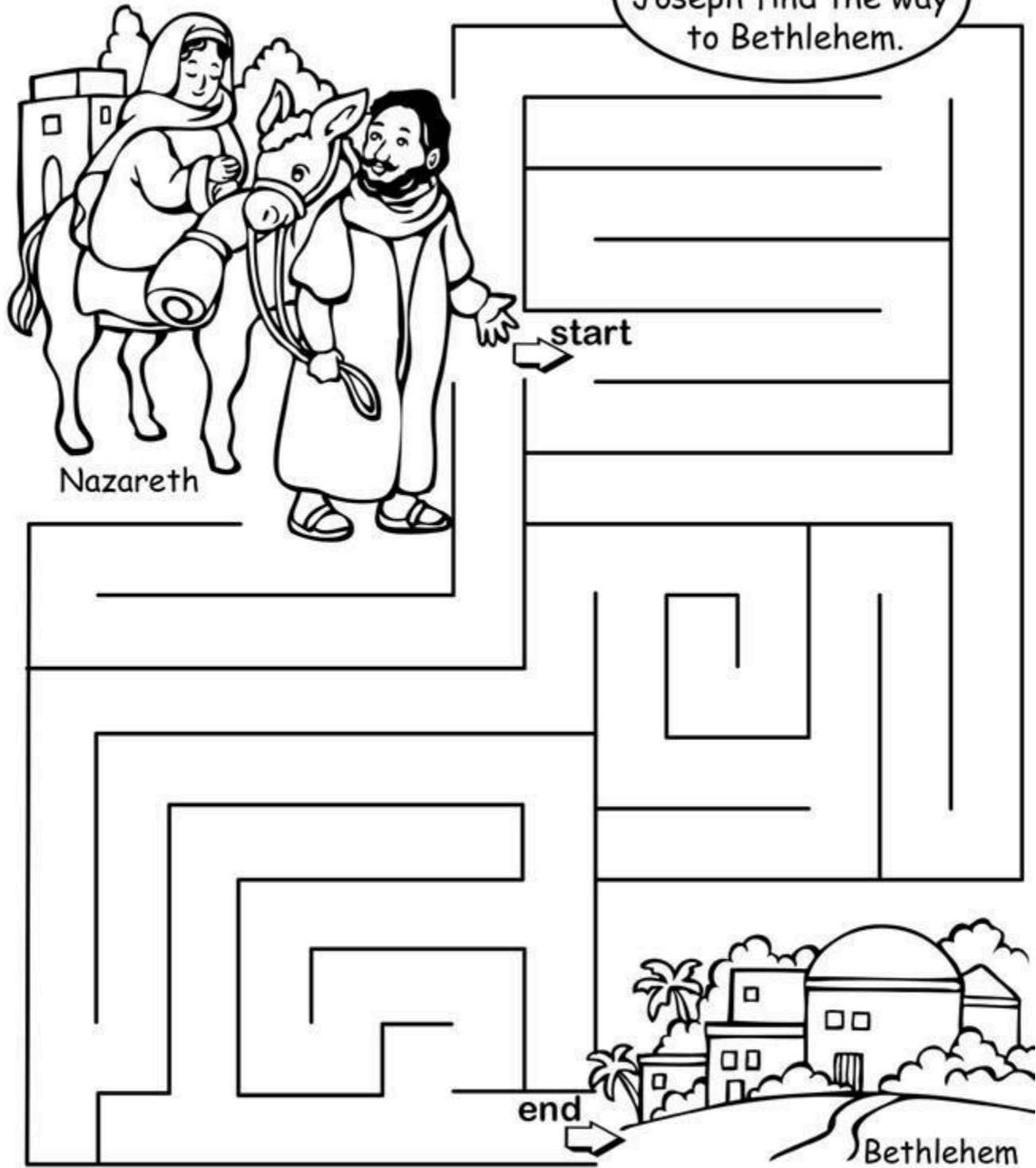
Sundays @ 7pm via Zoom

at **<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/79920727588>**

What is mindful meditation? *Focusing on being intensely aware of what you're sensing and feeling in the moment, without interpretation or judgment. Practicing mindfulness involves breathing methods, guided imagery, and other practices to relax the body and mind and help reduce stress. Join longtime practitioner Sue Findlay and others Sunday evenings online.*

A LONG JOURNEY

Help Mary and Joseph find the way to Bethlehem.



Joseph and Mary went on a long journey from the town of Nazareth to the town of Bethlehem.

(Luke 2:1-5)

My Soul Gives Glory to My God

My soul gives glory to my God. My heart pours forth its praise.
God lifted up on my lowliness in many marvelous ways.

My God has done great things for me; yes, holy is God's name.
All people will declare me blessed, and blessings they shall claim.

From age to age, to all who fear, such mercy love imparts, dispensing
justice are and near, dismissing selfish hearts.

Love casts the mighty from their thrones, promotes the insecure,
leaves hungry spirits satisfied, the rich seem suddenly poor.

Praise God, whose loving covenant supports those in distress,
remembering past promises with present faithfulness.

Faith Begins by Letting Go

Faith begins by letting go, giving up what had seemed sure,
taking risks and pressing on, through the way feels less secure:
pilgrimage both right and odd, trusting all our life to God.

Faith endures by holding on, keeping memory's roots alive
so that hope may bear its fruit: promised, our souls will thrive,
not through merit we possess but by God's great faithfulness.

Faith matures by reaching out, stretching minds, enlarging hearts,
sharing struggles, living prayer, binding up the broken parts;
till we find the common place ripe with witness to God's grace.