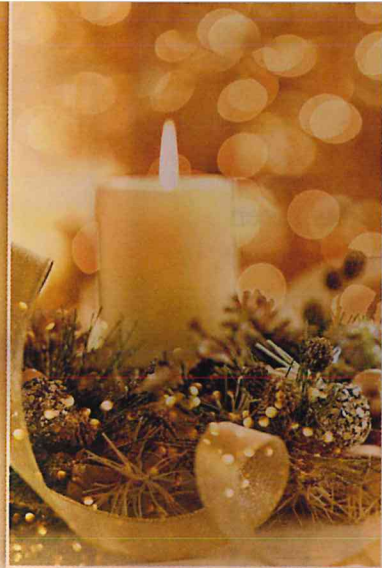


BEHOLD, I BRING YOU GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY,  
WHICH SHALL BE TO ALL PEOPLE.

LUKE 2:10

# Joy TO THE world, THE LORD IS COME!



**During this time of year, as sunlight fades, we supplement the light with our own—stringing holiday lights, lighting candles, and gathering with others to create warmth and brightness.**

**But no single light is enough to brighten the darkness alone.**

**It's the combined glow of many lights, shared and reflected by others,  
that truly illuminates our homes and communities.**

**Colette Lima, Essex County Community Organization (ECCO)**

December 2024

Dear Church Family and Friends:

As we journey through Advent amidst longer days of darkness, may it be an opportunity to reflect on Jesus's beginnings as a refugee in Egypt. Fearing King Herod would murder their child, Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt for safety and shelter. Families around the world continue the human impulse to seek safety, with some seeking this in the state of Massachusetts. This summer, if you traveled through Logan Airport, there is a good chance you witnessed Haitian women and children living in the airport terminal. These families hoped to find welcome and asylum after the breakdown of Haitian society and the rise of the gangs and violence.

In November, we celebrated the life of Warren Curtis Sawyer who was a force and demonstrated the depth of hospitality in creating The Caleb Foundation, which continues to provide affordable and supportive housing for those in need.

Each year, on your behalf, we collect funds at Christmas and direct them to a chosen nonprofit. The theme of hospitality and housing resonates deeply in our current reality, and this year we are hoping we can make a difference for asylum-seeking Haitian families.

Since the need is urgent and we are people of action, the Missions Team has taken direction from The Massachusetts Interfaith New Neighbor Coalition. In this spirit, we welcome your financial support and/or invite you to donate much-needed supplies and clothing for adults and babies. *You'll find collection bins in the church entry space through January.* Here's what's needed:

- > **Welcome Baby Bags** for expecting moms and their families. Include new diaper backpacks with new baby items only (onesies, socks, receiving blankets, bottles, wipes, bib, sleepers, etc.)
- > **Emergency Response Backpacks** for male or female size S, M, L, XL, 2XL, 3XL with gender neutral new clothing (socks, underwear, sweatpants, t-shirt)

Through **January 15, 2025**, you may also donate by check payable to "First Church" and adding "Christmas offering" in the memo section (and putting it in the offering plate), or by using the online First Church donation VANCO site filling in the line item, "Christmas offering." We will ensure funds are used towards supplies for Haitian families.

### **US and International**

As she has for the past 30+ years, Julia Wistran (and family) will be running the Alternative Gifts Market after church on December 15 and 22, so that you may purchase meaningful gifts that benefit people here in the United States and around the globe. Examples include Community Food Gardens in Haiti, or Literacy and Libraries in Ethiopia. You can view the catalogue in Clarke Hall or at the Alternative Gifts website, [www.alternativegifts.org](http://www.alternativegifts.org). Your purchase will come with a beautiful holiday card and a description of the project, which you can provide to your giftee(s).

Thank you for your consideration of these opportunities.

The First Church Mission Team

Sue Burgess, Janet Fischer, Danna Gobel, Anne Potts, Moe Sullivan, Sharon Thomas, Bruce Whear.