
SOUTH CHINA COMMUNITY CHURCH



Rev. Paul Harwath, Pastor

Winter 2023-2024

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

As a child, I was not very good at waiting. The days before Christmas were a time for us kids to try & find our Christmas presents that our parents usually hid around the house. I hated waiting until Christmas morning to find out what I was getting.



As I have aged, I have learned that the wait is more fun than the receiving. Anticipation builds hope & excitement. Advent is a time of anticipation, hope, & building excitement. It's common for people to dislike the Christmas season because of commercialism, white-washing the meaning, etc. These statements are only true if you let them be true.

We have control of our own actions & the way we perceive our surroundings. In other words, this time of year can be as exciting, meaningful, filled with wonder & as blessed as we ourselves make it. The reality of the true gift given to us by God all those years ago is every bit as exciting & full of wonder today! Other people's reactions & comments in no way take away from the excitement possible. All we have to do is grasp & realize the love filling our lives dating back 2,000+ years ago. Make this Advent a time of hope & love. - *God's love & mine be with you all, Pastor Paul*



CHURCH COUNCIL NEWS

President's Report:

Greetings of the season, my friends! With holidays fast approaching, I'm reminded of my thankfulness for all of you who keep this church going. Though we may seem small in number, we are mighty in spirit, & that's what matters most.

Thank you to those who were able to stay after Sunday services on November 26 for the "Hanging of the Greens" as we decorated the sanctuary & Memorial Hall for Christmas! We have some services & more events to look forward to: the first Sunday in Advent falls on December 3 & we'll have Communion, as usual. On Tuesday, December 5, Choir Director Mary Matteson will provide music for favorite hymns & Christmas carols. This will be an open house event for the community from 1-3PM & light refreshments will be served.



Our breakfasts have been well received & we plan to continue offering them monthly, on the second Saturday, from 8-10:30 AM. The next one will be December 9th with Santa, so please spread the word, come & bring friends!

A couple of other things you might like to learn about: Worship Radio & Shelters by Jesus, Inc. are teaming up to collect stocking stuffers for the homeless, primarily for the encampments in the Skowhegan area. You can drop off small

items like gloves, socks, hand warmers, etc. at Worship Radio Network headquarters, 160 Riverside Drive in Augusta. **Deadline is December 11th.**

On the musical side, the Hyssongs & Kindred Hearts will be having a concert on Saturday, December 16th, 7PM, at Faith Church, 250 Kennedy Memorial Drive in Waterville. All proceeds will go to Worship Radio. Posters for these events are on the table in Memorial Hall.*



So much has happened to our world & to us in 2023. Let's refresh our souls & be sure to attend services on Christmas Eve at 6PM & on Christmas Day at 10AM.

As we end the calendar year, the Council has been preparing a budget for 2024. When you receive a copy, please consider how expenses have increased in general. If you're able, an addition to your giving would be much appreciated. We try very hard to cut spending, but in many instances, there is no choice. We'll be voting on this at our Annual Meeting, January 28th.

My special thanks to all the Council members: Ron Maxwell, Kathy Plaisted, Janet Preston, Diane Rawson, Debbie Stowe; Secretary Jayne Winters, & especially Pastor Paul. Your wisdom & caring have made my "job" easier!

Whenever you have an opportunity to invite someone to join us at a service or event, please don't hesitate to do so. It's a part of our calling. - *God Bless you all, Emily Schroeder, Council President*

***Editor's Note:** Maine-ly Harmony is also in concert on Sunday, Dec 10 at 2PM at the Randolph United Methodist Church.

Missions & Benevolence:

The end of another year, with the snowy winter approaching. It takes my body longer to get used to the freezing temperatures, but I still enjoy the change of seasons.

As we all are getting ready for Christmas, we have been given the names of two families who are in need of extra support this year. I have no doubt our generous parishioners will fulfill their wishes & more. Sign-up sheets with children's ages & sizes are on the table in Memorial Hall.

PDF funds are always coming in, so we continue to help anyone who might need some extra help. Thank you for your continued generosity. - *Kathy Plaisted, Deacon*



Finance & Stewardship:

As of mid-November, the estimated yearly expenses for SCCC are about \$9,000 below budget & our estimated yearly revenue is roughly \$200 above budget. We have a predicted overall deficit of about \$1,900 for 2023, instead of the \$11,000 difference in our budget. I'd say that is quite good! Thank you for your unending support & commitment to keeping our church alive.

Summary as of October 31, 2023

Total Expenses:	\$59,761.25
Total Income:	\$59,661.09
Checkbook:	\$ 4,727.44
Meader Fund:	\$ 2,232.29
Memorial Fund:	\$35,102.97
Faith Ames Fund:	\$ 1,949.50
CD:	\$82,391.20

The Council has been working on the new budget for 2024. It is a difficult balancing act, trying to be realistic while keeping the expense numbers down & finding ways to increase our revenue. We have decided to present a balanced budget for 2024 by including the necessary income in the Loose Offerings line. This will make it easier to compare the expenses & revenues in our monthly summaries. The budget draft will be included with a letter of request for pledges for 2024. – *Respectfully submitted with appreciation, Janet Preston, Finance Chair*



Building & Grounds:

It has been a busy summer of work outside & any minute now snow will be here. Last minute touches outside are motion sensing lights for the parking lot to give us a safe walk to our cars at night.

Plans are being made for work to be done inside. As usual, please feel free to send suggestions, ideas or questions to me at room21@outlook.com. -*Thanks, Ron Maxwell, Deacon Building & Grounds*



Christian Education:

Adult Bible study is in full swing! Under Pastor Paul’s guidance we’re working on the Book of Mark. Lydia & Nancy have joined us as there are no young students

for Sunday School this year. Everyone is welcome, 9AM every Sunday. Thank you, Paul, for your leadership! - *Blessings, Emily Schroeder, Elder*



Communications & Outreach:

Happy Christmas & winter season! May the joy of celebrating our Lord’s birthday be uppermost in your minds & words at this time & all year long!

We continue to hold fundraisers to help with the budget for our little church & we always welcome new ideas & new people. The Craft Fair & Bake Sale in November went well; if you know of any other crafters, have them call me to get on next year’s list.

December 5 at 1PM is a Christmas Carols & Old Hymns Sing-a-Long with our wonderful Music Director, Mary Matteson. Please tell your friends to come to share in this new event! On December 9, from 8 to 10:30 AM, is our monthly Blessed Breakfast & Santa will be joining us! So, tell your friends & any kiddies you know to come eat & see Santa & take pictures.

If you notice someone missing at church, please give them a call or let me know & I can get in touch with them. Sometimes people just need to know that they have a Christian friend who cares.

I am headed to Florida mid-December until May, but will be just a phone call away. I know there are some Soup-To-Go/Chowder events being planned & maybe Sweets in February.

I'd like to give a special thank-you to Russell for maintaining the website & taping every Sunday! Also, thank you, Jayne, for all the posters made, note-taking, & keeping us straight. Our numbers are small, but if we work as a team, great things do happen! - *God Bless, Diane Rawson, Elder*



Worship Committee:

Mary Matteson will be playing for a Christmas sing-along with some of the old-time favorite carols & hymns on December 5th. We'll be having a Community Open House from 1-3PM. Cookies, tea & coffee will be served. Everyone is invited! Wishing everyone a blessed Christmas. - *In Christ, Debbie Stowe, Worship Chair*

PLEASE NOTE: Any *SCCC* or individual *Needham* sales need to be recorded on the calendar in the kitchen - thank you!

MEMBER NEWS:

- ♥ **Gillian Welch & Galen Lichterfeld** (Certified Arborist) of SymmeTree Tree & Garden Services in Vassalboro are offering discounts to *SCCC* members. Check out their Facebook page & please call (207) 458-7283 for further information about pruning, chipping or tree removal needs.
- ♥ For info about Mbingo Mountain Coffee, the Waterville coffee roasting business founded by **Churchill Elangwe-Preston**, call (207) 619-2492 or go to mbingomountaincoffee.com.

- ♥ **Casey Gillcash**, Mark & Debbie's son, was able to spend Thanksgiving at home with family following his surgery in Boston. Please continue to keep them in your prayers as they will have frequent trips to Boston for appointments.
- ♥ Baby **Elliot Preston**, who had been hospitalized for anemia, has been diagnosed with a tick-borne illness & is now receiving & responding well to treatment.



SYMPATHY & CONTINUED PRAYERS for the families & friends of those who have passed into God's hands.

Hank Dillenbeck (10/18/23)

Positive Quotes



"We're delightful, loving & lovable but also flawed creatures & that's OK. God could have made the world & put 8 billion perfect angels on it, but that's not what the spiritual journey is about. It's a journey of imperfection." – **Rainn Wilson, Actor**

"Not one part of your journey, even if you're not sure what you're doing or where it's going to lead you, is ever wasted. You're never late, you've simply not arrived yet." – **Joanna Patchett, who found her calling as a nurse at age 36**

“The only things that we can truly give to each other are the only things that we truly need – an ear to listen, a heart to care, a word of encouragement & a hand to help.” – **Jimmy Carter, Former President**

“I can’t do what I used to do, but I still care. I still pray.” – **Myrlie Evers-Williams, Civil Rights Activist**



From an article by Michael Foust:

The Bible-based hit series *The Chosen*, which follows the story of Jesus & His disciples, got its start with support from the Christian community, but is impacting individuals who often reject religion, including atheists, says director & creator Dallas Jenkins. The series has been watched by an estimated 94 million people worldwide.

"A friend of mine who was an atheist started watching *The Chosen* yesterday," wrote a fan, according to Jenkins. "He's one of those hardcore atheists that likes to troll. ... He said to me that he is now binging through the show & watched all of Season 1 yesterday. He told me it's the best Christian media that has ever been produced."

"He's always been interested in religion in more of an intellectual way & likes to make a lot of jokes about religion," the fan wrote. "So, I'm not sure what will happen, but you never know. It could plant a seed."

"The show is starting to spread outside of Christian circles, which is really cool," Jenkins said. Last week, Jenkins told Christian Headlines that the theatrical release "allows it to just reach more people [for Jesus]."

Sean O'Neal, a media writer for Texas Monthly, said *The Chosen* is "Christian TV that even heretics can get behind." It presents the disciples as "real, vaguely neurotic people, busting free of the stained-glass images that have long enshrined them. They bicker & fall in love. They struggle with insecurities & jealousies," he wrote.



WEB SITES TO CHECK OUT

<https://www.looseendsproject.org/>

to learn about a crew of volunteers who finish craft projects people's loved ones have left behind. Loose Ends is a nonprofit started in September 2022 by friends & knitters Jennifer Simonic of Seattle & Masey Kaplan of Portland, ME!

<https://www.guideposts.org/people-helping-people> for stories of giving, which is an important expression of faith & our call to "love one another as ourselves."

And from The Old Farmer's Almanac...



A school teacher asked, "What is the highest form of life?" "The giraffe," responded a little girl in her class. (1899)

"Our guides are handy with the axe." "Yes, they make the fir fly." (1910)

"[F]or those who might wonder why 'the greatest story ever told' couldn't also have a little more humor or humanity ... *The Chosen* is something of a miracle," O'Neal wrote.

NOTE: You can watch *The Chosen* on Amazon Prime, Netflix or Peacock TV. You can also stream all three seasons free at <https://www.angel.com/watch/the-chosen> Season 4 (of 7) will be released in 2024!



Michelle Rabon, wife & homeschooling mom of three, is focused on helping women engage with God's Word. Some of her thoughts about Advent follows:

"After the last few years, there seems to be something missing from the holiday season when it rolls around. Something feels off or different; maybe it is the heaviness that we all seem to be carrying around with us, making joy feel like another chore to add to our exhausting holiday routine.

As believers, we exert a great deal of effort to keep Christ at the center of our lives. We attend church, read our Bibles regularly, and pray. We practice spiritual habits to keep our hearts set on the Gospel because spiritual habits shape our spiritual relationship.

These spiritual habits require intention. We have to make the time to incorporate them into our daily lives. However, during the busy season of

the holidays, our spiritual habits are usually the first thing we remove from our list, prioritizing grocery lists, party invitations, and buying gifts.

But here's the truth: when life gets busy, our spiritual habits should increase, not decrease. While it seems obvious in the Christmas season to make spiritual discipline a priority because the season is about Christ, here we are – slaves to secular demands that drain our souls and push the King of Kings to the background.

THE DISCIPLINE OF ADVENT

I have long considered Advent a spiritual discipline. It requires us to focus and be intentional in the busyness of life. Advent may be an annual practice for you or a spiritual discipline you never thought of. We must first understand what it means and why we participate in it during the Christmas season.

Advent is a season known throughout the world. It is known through most denominations and is practiced amongst many believers during the Christmas season. Yet, there is much about Advent that we do not know or even grasp a full understanding of, missing spiritual truths of the season.

Traditionally, the first two weeks of Advent were designated as looking forward to the future return of Christ. The time yet to come when Christ will return to earth and rule and reign as the King of Kings.

The second two weeks of Advent traditionally focus on the first coming of Christ in the manger. This time allows us to rest in the peace of the Savior who has come and to worship Him for the gift of salvation He brought with Him.

The Advent season is reflective of who we are as a Church, waiting for Christ to come again. We are in the "last days." We have been in these days since the ascension of Christ. Since Christ ascended, the church has waited for His return and chooses to celebrate what will come to pass.

The how of Advent is a bit simpler because there are no rigid rules to follow. The spiritual practice can look any way you would like. It takes place daily for four weeks prior to Christmas. The ultimate goal is being in the Word. There are several ways to add this practice to your life during the season of Advent. Let's look at five simple ways to incorporate Advent into your Christmas worship:

1. An Advent Bible Study. Many Advent Bible studies can be found at your local Christian bookstore covering everything from the traditional Christmas story to a more focused topic like the people of Scripture. A Bible study isn't required, simply reading through one of the Gospels during December will keep your heart and mind centered. Keep it simple, read one chapter of Luke daily leading up to Christmas.

2. Scripture Memory is one of my favorite things to do through the season of Advent. I focus on a verse per week, sharing it with my family, printing it, and keeping it close by. This helps me to meditate and memorize verses and is a great tool, especially if you are extremely busy. It will keep the Word of God constantly in the front of your mind.

3. Family Devotions can be done around the table at dinner or when bedtime rolls around. It could consist of reading through the Bible together, asking questions, and even practicing Scripture memory. If your children are young, help them focus on the small things. Talk about the nativity scene, use kids' Advent verse cards, or even a storybook Bible.

4. Advent Candle-Lighting. Traditionally, Advent includes the lighting of candles each Sunday. Some families light a candle each night at dinner through Advent before sharing Bible study time together. The Advent wreath has candles that represent different themes of the season, such as love, peace, hope, and joy. Lighting a candle each night builds anticipation for the celebration of the Christ child.

5. Fasting is another common practice in Advent. Fasting isn't always related to food, but is abstaining from something in order to keep our minds focused on God.

One of my favorite ways to incorporate fasting into my Advent season is logging off of social media from Thanksgiving through the New Year. This a great way to disconnect, and I promise you won't even miss it.

Whether you choose one of these practices or come up with something on your own, simple is best. There is no need to overwhelm yourself with more things to do.”



- ✝ ADULT BIBLE STUDY, SUNDAYS AT 9AM
- ✝ SUNDAY CHURCH SERVICE, 10AM
- ✝ COMMUNION: DEC 3 - JAN 7 - FEB 4 - MARCH 3
- ✝ COUNCIL MEETINGS, TBA
- ✝ PASTOR'S DISCRETIONARY FUND (PDF) DONATION SUNDAY: DEC 31 - MARCH 31
- ✝ BLESSED BREAKFAST, 2ND SATURDAY EACH MONTH, 8-10:30 AM: DEC 9 - JAN 13 - FEB 10 - MARCH 9
- ✝ DEC 5: OPEN HOUSE SING-A-LONG, 1-3PM
- ✝ DEC 24: CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLE-LIGHT SERVICE, 6PM
- ✝ SOUPER BOWL FUNDRAISER, FEB 10 (TAKE-OUT ONLY WITH BLESSED BREAKFAST)

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*“May the God of hope fill you
with all joy and peace as you
trust in Him, so that you may
overflow with hope by the power
of the Holy Spirit.”*

- Romans 15:13

