

## Sunday Services on GCTV

Sunday: 10:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m.  
Monday-Friday: 2:30 p.m.  
Saturday: 9:30 a.m., 2:30 p.m.

January 2017

**First Congregational Church,**  
United Church of Christ  
P.O. Box 155  
Gray, ME 04039

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Website: [www.grayfirst.org](http://www.grayfirst.org)

**Rose's Office Hours:**  
**Tuesday & Friday 9:00 – 3:00**

*Office hours subject to change.  
Please call ahead to be sure.*

# First Church Notes

## From Pastor Hyde

*By Rev. Dr. Richard A. Hyde*

There really was a Saint Nicholas. Far from being Dutch or even from northern Europe, he lived in the 4th century in what is now Turkey and was famous for his extraordinary generosity. One occasion for his generosity came when a certain man had three daughters, but not enough money to pay for their weddings. Nicholas heard of the man's plight and decided to give him some money anonymously. He came by the man's house in the middle of the night and tossed a small bag of gold coins in an open window. He did this again and yet once more, but on the third time the man was waiting up to discover who was tossing money in his window and so the story got out. In one version of the story he tosses the coins down the chimney, which then filled the stockings of the daughter, who had hung her stocking at the chimney to dry.

Hmmmm.

News of the generosity of Nicholas spread far and wide, across the Mediterranean to Italy, then to northern Europe including Holland, where his name morphed into Sinter Klaas, then to the New World with the founding of New Amsterdam, soon to become New York. Somehow along the way, the thin, ascetic saint put on a few pounds and a fur-lined suit to keep him warm in northern latitudes in winter. His name rounded out as well to the contemporary Santa Claus.

So, that is how we have the large, jolly, red-cheeked Santa in the red suit with the reindeer. His day is December 6th, which is the day children get gifts in Holland, or so I have read.

Whatever the historicity of Saint Nicolas, we are certainly now in that dark, cold, wonderful season when human kindness and generosity are at such a premium, that season when we celebrate the generosity demonstrated for us by any number of Christian saints, and, of course, our Lord and Savior. May we all be touched by God's infinite generosity this season.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son."

## Lectionary Readings for January 2017

### January 1, 2017

- Ecclesiastes 3:1-13
- Psalm 8
- Revelations 21:1-6a
- Matthew 25:31-46

### January 8, 2017

- Isaiah 42:1-9
- Psalm 29
- Acts 10:34-43
- Matthew 3:13-17

### January 15, 2017

- Isaiah 49:1-7
- Psalm 40:1-11
- 1 Corinthians 1:1-9
- John 1:29-42

### January 22, 2017

- Isaiah 9:1-4
- Psalm 27:1, 4-9
- 1 Corinthians 1:10-18
- Matthew 4:12-23

### January 29, 2017

- Micah 6:1-8
- Psalm 15
- 1 Corinthians 1:18-31
- Matthew 5:1-12

## Monthly Financial Report

### November 2016 Income and Expenses

Pledges	\$5,397.00
Loose Offering	341.00
Orphan Bills	40.26
Rental (Parsonage)	1,450.00
Rental Holly Fair Tables	335.00
Coin Jar	21.10
Donation (Pantry)	100.00
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$7,684.36</b>

Expenses for the month of November totaled \$8,010.27. To meet the budget for 2016, our monthly income should be \$9,046.74. Hopefully, everyone will try to keep up with their pledges in December.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Fran Hutchings

## Annual Meeting January 22, 2017 (Snow date January 29)

Annual Reports are due in the church office **NO LATER THAN JANUARY 8<sup>th</sup>**. Please submit them in a MS Word format and NOT a .PDF, WordPad or NotePad or Google doc please. These do not come through well enough for me to capture the formatting and it is very difficult to fit them into the document as I prepare it. If you are waiting for financial information from the bank, please contact me for an extension to the deadline.

There are many available opportunities to serve your church on various boards and committees within the church. The Nominating Committee will be delighted to consider you for open positions. Please see Don Hutchings for more information.

As is our tradition, there will be a light luncheon prior to the annual meeting. A sign-up sheet will be posted in the vestry for donations or you may contact Fran Hutchings.

**Small Group Returns . . . January 10, 2017**  
**Everything You Wanted to Know About Christianity but Were Afraid to Ask**

Have you ever been in a Church Service, a Bible Study or Small Group and something is said that:

- (1) you don't agree with
- (2) don't understand or
- (3) \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever just wanted to sit in a small group and discuss the challenges or your questions about your faith?

Well, I may not have the all answers. Actually, I guarantee you, I do not have all the answers. But we can work on this together.

Beginning on Tuesday, January 10th our small group will resume at the home of Michael and Jan Mills. We anticipate going for just 6 weeks (maybe 7) and as before, each night we plan to do a study that is a standalone, so you can come one night, all nights, or every other night. Whatever your schedule permits and you desire.

If there is a topic that you would like us to discuss, or have addressed, please call, email, or even just drop a note into the offering plate, if you wish to remain anonymous.

We will be using several resources throughout the study, but you are not required to buy any books. I will make a resource list available each night. There are a couple of resources that we will probably be using on a consistent basis: *Now That is a Good Question* By R.C. Sproul, and the other is John Stott's *Basic Christianity* and of course the primary reference we will be using is the Holy Bible.

If you would like to assist with hosting and help provide refreshments (I mean what is a meeting of a group of people talking about Christianity without food?) please let us know and we will plan accordingly. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the church office or Michael and Jan Mills.

We hope to see you. Have a blessed New Year.

*In case of snow cancellations, we will send out an email blast, and post it on Facebook. And telephone anyone who does not use a computer.*