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To: fccv@snet.net;
Date: Thu, November 29, 2012 12:25:30 PM
Cc:
Subject: Pastor's Weekly Email

*Of the Father's love begotten, ere the worlds began to be,
 He is Alpha and Omega, He the source, the ending He,
 Of the things that are, that have been,
 And that future years shall see, evermore and evermore!*

Prudentius (348–413)

Happy New Year!

No, my greeting is not coming a month early. In the Christian calendar, the first Sunday in Advent marks the beginning of a new year. This coming Sunday, December 2nd, is the first Sunday in Advent. Advent is a season in the church year which precedes Christmas and is a time set aside for us to pray and reflect on our hopes for God's presence in the new year to come. We have Advent rituals, including the lighting of four candles on Sundays during Advent and Advent calendars, which help to mark the days of the season leading up to Christmas Eve.

The words above consist of the opening verse to the Advent hymn "Of the Father's Love Begotten." Advent hymns are often overlooked as we are overwhelmed with a variety of season, secular and sacred Christmas carols at this time of year. I believe this is unfortunate as the Advent hymns are so rich in lyrics and rhythm, often reminding us of the value of learning to wait and hope for the blessings of God soon to come.

"Of the Father's Love Begotten" was written in the late 4th century (with revisions as recent as the 19th century), but the words and music have a quality about them that provokes deep thinking and a haunting melody. The opening verse speaks of the universality and timelessness of Jesus Christ--his message, his model for life, his trust of God to the point of death and beyond.

May these days of Advent be to us all a time of renewal and holy waiting so that the wonder and promise of new hope alive in our midst that comes at Christmas may be born within us each and within our congregation in transformative new ways this year.

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This coming weekend, we conclude one year in the Christian calendar and begin a new one, in the most bittersweet of ways. FCCV has been blessed to have the Rev. Cindy Carr as part of the pastoral staff for over twenty-one years. During this time, the church has gone through times of challenge and times of renewal and Pastor Cindy has been a vital part of all of this. Pastor Cindy is leaving FCCV to pursue some new opportunities and challenges in her ministry. We have been blessed and enriched to have had her here for so long and commend her to new ministries in the body of Christ in the days to come.

This coming weekend provides two very special times to remember, honor, celebrate and give thanks to Pastor Cindy.

On Saturday, December 1st, there will be a Gathering of Gratitude from 3-6 pm in the Fellowship Hall. This will be a time of fellowship and refreshments and a chance for church members and friends to stop by to say good-bye, thanks, and whatever other good wishes that need to be expressed to Pastor Cindy. This is designed to be a time in which people can come and go as schedules allow. It also is likely to be the best time to have a chance to have some personal time with Pastor Cindy as time after worship on Sunday is likely to be quite busy.

On Sunday, December 2nd the First Sunday in Advent, Pastor Cindy will preach at FCCV for the final time and lead the communion liturgy during worship. We hope everyone will have a chance to be present for these special times in Pastor Cindy's ministry here with us.

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Next Sunday, December 9th, the Second Sunday in Advent, there will be two special activities to mark the Advent season.

The very popular Advent Workshop will be held in the Fellowship Hall just after worship and all are welcome. In recent years, we've had the Advent workshop during Sunday school, but in response to some who missed this special seasonal time, we've scheduled it for just after worship. We hope you and your family will come and enjoy this.

Also, on December 9th, our Music @ First concert series, will highlight the choirs of FCCV. This concert will feature virtually all of our choirs, spanning a wide number of ages. There will be a time for refreshments and fellowship afterwards. We hope you and your family can be part of this special celebration this year.

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Pledge update - As of November 27th, a total of \$191, 833 has been pledged. This means we have \$65,167 to go to meet our 2013 goal. If you've not yet completed your pledge card for this, please do so this week. Thank you for your support of FCCV in 2013.