

## **2020 Christmas Eve Worship Services @ 4PM & 6PM**

Some have expressed a desire to re-instate the traditional 10pm worship service on Christmas Eve. Your Board of Deacons thought it wise to reach out and communicate how we came to settle on a 4pm and 6pm service schedule instead. We want you to know we're listening and that we've prayerfully and carefully considered this request.

Beacon Falls Congregational Church has a Board of Deacons consisting of 9 members elected by the congregation and entrusted to carry out certain duties which include "conferring with and assisting the Pastor in all matters relating to public worship and the music program". With this obligation in mind, it was decided that BFCC will hold two Christmas Eve Services this year at 4 PM and 6 PM. Considerations included:

- Last year, in 2019, BFCC had only one Christmas Eve service, at 6:00 PM. This was a departure from our traditional schedule of 6pm + 10pm. Our rationale included 1) total Christmas Eve attendance going back to 2016 did not support having two separate services and 2) part of our church's Strategic Plan was to make a concerted effort to reach out and better suit the needs of younger families. We were well pleased with the result that the one 6PM service drew the largest total Christmas Eve attendance in the last 4 years (even more than the combined total from 2 services).
- This year, in 2020, we settled on two worship services - 4 and 6 PM. This should allow for plenty of seating room while socially distanced. We will live-stream the 6PM service via facebook for those who can't attend in-person. Our rationale includes 1) our continued desire to suit the needs of younger families, 2) deference to any elderly members who may not feel comfortable driving late at night and 3) compliance with current State of CT COVID Phase 2.1 Restrictions and Recommendations ...
  - Restrictions
    - Religious gatherings capped at 50% capacity, 100 people maximum (for BFCC, this limit is 50 to 55 people).

- Recommendations
  - Ages 60+ or high risk, take extra precautions
  - Stay at home from 10PM to 5AM
  - Events – Gatherings should end by 9:30PM
  - If you have to ask, wear a mask.

Without a doubt, 2020 has been a challenging year for all of us. COVID-19 has caused a variety of disruptions in all aspects of our personal, professional and yes, even in our church lives. On behalf of the Board of Deacons, I just want to let our church family know that we do not take our duties lightly. We are working very hard and prayerfully considering the sometimes-difficult decisions that must be made. The Deacons ask for the congregation's prayers, support and understanding during this time.

There are so many things about our church life that we all miss: singing, the choir, unison prayers, and responsorial readings. Even as we refrain from these things, COVID cases continue to steeply spike-up in our area; it's easy to get discouraged.

But let us all remember the one constant we can always rely upon is God! Advent is a joyous season of anticipation and preparation. As we ready ourselves to celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ, we give thanks to God that we are both able to meet in person and to provide the option to those who are high-risk individuals to attend virtually. Let us not take these blessings for granted! There are many churches that still have not met in-person nor virtually since the beginning of COVID. We are thankful to God for all the many, many ways in which He has blessed us and we look forward to celebrating His birth!

If you have any questions, concerns or needs, please do not hesitate to reach out to Pastor Jess or any one of the Deacons.

Blessings,

Joe Whitehead – On behalf of the Board of Deacons.