It is the end of October and we continue to grapple with the emotional, physical, and spiritual realities of living in these pandemic times. We look back on an Easter celebrated during the Covid quarantine. We look forward to an Advent and Christmas season filled with many of the same questions about how we faithfully and safely minister to those looking to find the hope, love, joy and peace that the light of Jesus brings into the world.

Below are some resources to help you plan your faith formation activities for the upcoming months. I borrow these words from the Church of England's Comfort and Joy theme this year, may these resources "enable us to reconnect with the rich and joyous traditions of the past and to offer God's consoling love in the present."

Visit our Website

Featured Resources: Christmas Pageants

Webinar: Christmas Pageant 2020

Click here to register and view a recording of this Practical Resources for Churches webinar, originally held on October 8th, with leaders Debbie Kolacki and Karen Smith. They shared ideas on different Christmas Pageants that are well suited for online, Zoom, "covid-era" adaptations.

The editors of Building Faith offer information on how can we share the incredible story of the Incarnation through mediums that will engage our community in meaningful ways of retelling the narrative while maintaining appropriate physical distance in their article, Christmas Pageants 2020: Recorded, Zoomed, Live Outside

“The Greatest Digital Christmas Pageant Ever!”
tumbuhKIDS presents "The Greatest Digital Christmas Pageant Ever!" Digital Planning Packet for churches and faith-based childcare centers. Written in the same vein as the “no rehearsal” Christmas pageants of the past, "The Greatest Digital Christmas Pageant Ever!" allows those who work with children (and/or youth) to conduct a traditional Christmas pageant online with little planning or preparation. You are able to keep your community safe by hosting online and make sure your church community is still making holiday memories!

Tumbuh is an organization that exists to connect people across cultures, religions, and continents to grow global communities of socially-conscious, self-aware, spiritually-grounded global citizens who work together to positively impact the world.

Nativity Online

Chole Axford describes an interactive nativity drama using social networking sites to tell the Christmas story in a fresh way in her article, Nativity Online

Las Posadas, 2020

In her Advent Workshop, Rev. Maren Tirabassi provided a brief script suggesting a celebration based on an adaptation of Las Posadas (a Central American or Latin American custom to remind everyone about the essential homelessness of the Holy Family when they arrived in Bethlehem). She adapted the tradition this year to be part caroling and part pageant.

Advent Resources

An Illustrated Advent for Families: Do Not Be Afraid

This resource from Illustrated Ministry is an opportunity for families to take time each week during the Advent season to be intentional and focus on their faith. These weekly reflections explore our theme, "Do Not Be Afraid," which is found in Jesus’ birth story in the Gospel of Luke. Visit their webpage to download a free sample.

#AdventWord - A Global Advent

Faithful Families for Advent and Christmas: 100 Ways to Make the Season Sacred

In the hustle and bustle of the holidays, it’s easy for families to forget the true meaning of the season. In her new book, Traci Smith, provides ideas for faith practices for Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany, that parents, grandparents, Sunday school teachers, pastors, and anyone who cares about kids will find easy, fun, and meaningful for bringing the sacred back into the season.
# AdventWord is a global, online Advent calendar. Each day from the first Sunday of Advent through Christmas Day, #AdventWord offers meditations and images to inspire and connect individuals and a worldwide community of believers to the themes of Advent. You are invited to participate by posting your own images using the hashtag #AdventWord and the word of the day, for example, #journey. Individuals, congregations, organizations, and institutions can all participate.

Learn more >>

On Monday, November 2nd Traci is also hosting an hour long workshop on Advent and Christmas ideas for your congregation. Register now >>

Light of the World: A Beginners Guide to Advent

In Light of the World: A Beginner’s Guide to Advent, author, professor, and biblical scholar Amy-Jill Levine explores the biblical texts surrounding the story of the birth of Jesus. Join her as she traces the Christmas narrative through the stories of Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary, the journey to Bethlehem, and the visit from the Magi.

Watch Session 1 to Learn More:

Download these Advent Activity ideas from Vibrant Faith. The files contains suggestions for cross generational sessions, teen families and young adults.

New England Environmental Justice Youth Summit

All are welcome to Join Us for this Webinar in Two Sessions.

Thursday Evening, November 19, 2020 7:00 - 9:00 PM
- Rev Gordon Rankin (NHCUCC) will speak on Caring for the Earth and Indigenous People, about his service in the Lakota and Standing Rock Community
- Dr. Jehann El Bisi’s 30” Documentary will share her film “The River Cried, M’ni W’Coni” on the Actions of the Water Protectors at Standing Rock (a UCC Premier).

Saturday Morning, November 21, 2020 9:00 AM - Noon
- Rev. Dr. Jim Antal (UCC Climate Justice Special Advisor) will Keynote on the “Climate Crisis”
- Video and discussion on the efforts to shut down the last NE coal plant (350NH)
- Health Effects of PFAS and PFOA (Sierra Club)
- “Storytelling” (350NH)
- “Fierce Vulnerability” on how to cope with the stress of climate change, by Marla Marcum of the Climate Disobedience Center.

Download the event flyer >>

Register now at:
- https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_0_ZKZVcRRCqrGWlYk0i3VA
Employment

Smith Memorial Church, in Hillsboro, is looking for a Youth Group Leader for their Middle School youth group, and to serve as Administrator for both the Middle and High School youth groups. This is a part-time, stipend position. They seek someone with a heart for middle school and high school youth outreach as they gather in weekly groups for mission projects, conversation, fun and adventure.

Job Description:

- Plan and lead events, gatherings, mission outreach opportunities, fun trips when it becomes safe to do so, weekly meetings and overall programming
- Meet regularly with adult leaders to provide training and resources for the adult leaders to use.
- Encourage active participation among the youth in the community.
- Reach out to parents of youth and gather their support for youth activities

If interested in this position; please email a brief cover letter explaining your interest in this position and also attach onto the email a single page resume documenting your most recent background and experience.

Please email questions and resumes to: pastor@smithmemorialucc.org

For more local opportunities visit the Classifieds/Help Wanted section of the NH Conference UCC website.

Willing to relocate? The UCC Ministry Opportunities webpage is a great source for Christian Education and Faith Formation openings nationwide.

The Word of God

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep." Romans 12:15 (NRSV)