

GRACE NOTES

Grace is a Green Church!

Newsletter of Grace Congregational United Church of Christ, an Open and Affirming Congregation

Congregational Meeting held June 23

The June 23 Congregational Meeting was held as a worship service, integrating the business of our church with the worship of our God.

The previous minutes and Annual Report were accepted. Copies of the report are still available from Pastor Brad. Several of the ministry representatives spoke to their reports. There was also a brief financial overview and an update on the Crossroads program.

Pastor Brad preached a sermon reflecting on the challenge of coming to a consensus on our future as a church; he concluded with this paragraph:

“Each of us faces, again, the serious question of how we can personally change to improve the future of Grace. Similarly, how will we prioritize our lives so that Grace Church thrives? Then we also get to figure out what we want; what we need from Grace Church. What are the deep questions and topics we should be engaging? What ministries are we being called to by the world and by our God?”

Following the meeting, Interior Decorator Sandy Krentz did a brief presentation showing some of the design changes she is recommending to improve the interior of our church.

Dead Sea Scroll Exhibit at Museum; Want to Go?

The Boston Museum of Science has a fascinating new exhibit: **Dead Sea Scrolls: Life in Ancient Times.** Brad and Debbie Watters have volunteered to take interested church members into the museum for a tour. Contact Brad if interested.

Next Step for Crossroads; Congregational Conversation on September 8

During the summer, the congregation was invited to participate in a series of five Crossroads New Beginnings house meetings. The house meetings have had us talking in small groups about the present situation of our church, and closing in on a bold decision about the future. When group facilitators met last week to discuss how things were going, the mood was very positive and optimistic.

What is next in the Crossroads New Beginnings process? People who have been away for the summer are wondering what they have missed. Others are asking, “What has been going on in the other groups?”

Following worship on Sunday, September 8th, we will gather as a community in fellowship with food and conversation. The Leadership Team will provide an overview of the results of the house meetings, and then we will talk about what is next.

Please come and be sure to bring your imagination.

Linda Dunbrack

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From the Pastor

Dear Ones,

Then God spoke to Job out of the storm. God said:

“Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge?

Brace yourself like an adult;

I will question you, and you shall answer me.

- Job 38:1-3

Perhaps you remember this moment of scripture. It happens almost at the end of the great, ancient folktale of Job. Job is the righteous adult who is persecuted at the whim of gods. In the face of undeserved disaster and tragedy, Job struggles to refrain from turning his back on all that he has ever held to be holy. Some friends try to get him to fess up. He must have done something wrong. They reason that misfortunes come to those who deserve misfortune and, since God is just, Job must have messed up. Job only knows what he knows, *“I cry out to you, God, but you do not answer; I stand up, but you merely look at me.”* Job 30:20.

Can you relate?

It’s pretty easy to understand Job’s despair. It is also easy to understand Job’s cry. Which of us has not faced awful situations and cried, “Why me?” Which of us has not found ourselves protesting, “I didn’t do anything wrong! How can this have happened to me?” Perhaps you have been persecuted, punished, tricked, or in some other way victimized by someone or something and struggled to understand why.

In addition to answers, we want the broken thing fixed, the lost ones restored, or the wrong righted. When no fix is possible, there might come a time when you find yourself asking God to explain it and fix it.

And when God is silent and does not obviously respond, then we are exactly in Job’s place, as represented in the first part of the Bible verse, *“I cry out to you, God, but you do not answer.”*

To open ourselves to learn from this story, we need to look closely at what Job actually says in the face of God’s silence. The rest of the line goes, *“... I stand up, but you merely look at me.”*

Do you see it? Job at that moment knows that God can see him. Job accepts that God is aware

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August Calendar

- August 8:00 AM Men’s Breakfast
- August 4 10:00 AM No Singers Rehearse
Worship/Communion
- August 11 10:00 AM No Singers Rehearse
Worship/Communion
11:30 AM Faith in Action
- August 18 10:00 AM No Singers Rehearse
Worship
11:30 AM Green Team Meeting
- August 24 9:30 AM Community Garden Tour

- August 25
Joint Service with Edwards and Plymouth
10:00 AM Worship
- August 26 7:30 PM Leadership Ministry Team
- September 8
Crossroads Congregational Conversation

Mark Your Calendar
Sunday, August 25 - 10:00 AM
Grace will host a joint service with Edwards and Plymouth Churches



Employment and Employers

When did you last look for a job? Perhaps you are looking now! The range of jobs that people do in Massachusetts alone is quite different from the day I first found part-time work in the town hardware store in 1965.

I recently took a highly scientific and balanced sampling of the kinds of jobs young people (age 16-35) are finding. Okay, it was neither scientific nor balanced; but it was quick! I just ran through in my mind the jobs my three kids and their partners have. Here are the employers of the six rigorously selected young people, with descriptions where needed:

- The Berkeley Repertory Theater
- www.GameSpot.com - reviews, webcasts, and conversation about electronic games
- The Utah Pride Center
- Snowbird - ski resort
- WegoWise - maker of on-line tool for monitoring and analyzing the energy use of multifamily and single family housing.
- Opinion Dynamics - research to advance knowledge to address emerging energy and social issues.

One might try to derive some meaning from this list. For example, only two of these have been around very long (Berkeley Rep and Snowbird.) Can you guess why I am writing this as a Kermit's Korner article?

You got it! Two out of the six are companies that expressly exist because of our need to respond to climate change, energy costs rising, environmental degradation, and the need to adapt to all these changes in a smarter way. The power of private enterprise is, in at least some cases, being directed at this need to adapt. I find this encouraging.

The July 27th Foam Collection was a great success. Thanks to Barbara Sherman and Jean Burr for organizing this important mission four times a year. And thanks and to all those who helped out during the day.

One of the aspects of our Foam Collection Ministry that I am sure to mention every time I tell someone about it is how it is done in partnership with a private company, Refoamit, LLC. Granted, Dave and Barbara Sherman who are Refoamit are also "us," but I don't want to lose the point. Private enterprise is already changing to take advantage of business opportunities. Furthermore, a lot of this private enterprise is the action of entrepreneurs - people who start businesses (and mostly remain small.)

Entrepreneurs, like all business people, are certainly motivated by the opportunity for profit. One might want to point out how the profit-motive has got us into the mess (feedlot waste holding ponds, mountain top removal coal mining, trash archipelagos, ...) we're in and there's no denying that! At the same time, the motives of all entrepreneurs and business people are not singular. People are motivated to start companies and work at particular kinds of companies for layers of reasons. In many cases, these reasons include undoing environmental damage, improving efficiency of energy use, reducing pollution, and a long list of purposes that "do good while doing well."

So let's not only frown and shake our finger at "corporations." Let's look for and patronize those who are on our side against the mess. Let's believe they're out there. Let's find the real green companies among them. Sound okay to you?

Brad Watters

Green Team Update (June and July meeting)

We are in conversation with St. Andrews Church about the possibility of sharing electricity from the installation of solar panels on their building. They anticipate generating more electricity than they need and we are waiting for a proposal from them.

The "Make Your Own Cleaning Solutions" workshop in May was interesting and helpful to those attending. Recipes are available from Mary Memmott.

We are proud to say that Grace Church was presented with the second level Green Church Award at the June annual meeting of the MA Conference. We are now looking at level three!

We have taken an inventory of the light bulbs now in use in our building. This will be available when we have an energy audit later this month. Some of the other possible projects were:

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Free Community Gardens Tour

**Saturday, August 24th
9:30 AM to 1:00 PM***

- Thinking of starting or improving a veggie garden next year or even this fall?
- Come tour our town's community gardens as well as home gardens - each with different designs and focus.
- Get inspiration, ideas and advice from local gardeners.
- Tour all the garden, or just one - adjust for your availability.

Rain or Shine event - dress for the weather

**Carpools start at First United Methodist Church
Community Garden
36 Water Street, Framingham**

A project of Transition Framingham - a group of citizens working towards a more sustainable future for Framingham in the face of economic instability and climate change. Check us out at transitionframingham.org or contact transitionframingham@yahoo.com

Faith in Action

• **Faith In Action** will meet following worship on Sunday, August 11. Please join us for a discussion of a few ideas for some fun and educational activities.

• **Foam Collection:** I am so pleased to report a very successful collection on July 27. In the morning, it seemed as though we weren't as busy as usual but by the end of the day, we had come close to filling the trailer and had several huge bags filled with the colored and food containers which went into the box truck. Thank you to everyone who worked hard on a beautiful (but still hot) day! A special thanks to Mary Memmott and family for providing a healthy and delicious lunch for the workers.

We have now completed our 4th year of quarterly collections and still going strong! Our next scheduled one is on October 26, which happens to fall either on or close to Make a Difference Day. We've already made a difference, but let's continue to do so!

"Life is fragile. Handle with prayer." (Author unknown but submitted by Ruth Bodge)

Jean Burr

Christian Education

"Camp Grace" for the children continues this summer with hands-on activity time outside the worship space. Raechel Belloli is leading the August 3 and 17 sessions. Thanks to Mary Memmott and Raechel for spearheading this effort and to the aides who help out. No Camp Grace on August 25th as there will be an intergenerational joint service at Grace.

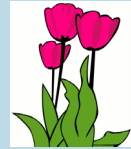
About Us

Our prayers and sympathy are with Lynn Burdett and her family at the loss of her daughter, Cathy.

Prayers and sympathy for Jean Oteni and family. Her brother, Walter Taft, recently passed away.

Altar Flowers

If you would like to provide flowers for the altar, please be in touch with Ruth Carney. She can order them from our new florist (\$43 or higher or lower depending on what you would like) or you may bring flowers yourself (perhaps from your garden). If there is a special event in the life of Grace that you would like lifted up and acknowledged with flowers, just let Ruth know and she will arrange it. (We do have funds donated for this purpose.)



Grace Women United

GWU will meet at the church on Wednesday, September 11th at 11:30 AM.

Lynn Burdett

Book Club



Book Club will meet at the church on Wednesday, September 25th at 10:00 AM.

Lynn Burdett

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From the Pastor

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of all the awful things that have happened in Job's life and the awful fix Job is in at that very moment. Job is facing the reality of his relationship with God. And what is that? God is looking at him; just looking at him.

Perhaps it begins to dawn on Job that God isn't going to justify all the misery and death and loss. God isn't going to explain it or fix it. And that is such a surprising and shocking truth that the door to a new understanding of God is opening in that exact, pivotal moment.

Our relationship with God is not about supernatural hands catching us when we fall. There is no cosmic fairness when it comes to who gets cancer, whose child dies too young, whose husband gets Alzheimer's, who loses a job, whose heart is broken, or any of it. Nor do we live in a world where sacrificing the right animal or promising never to use bad language again or avoiding stepping on cracks is going to keep us from harm or restore us when awful things happen.

Then what can we know of God? What does the story we have in the Book of Job tell us? Well, it's a big book! Here is what I think you can hear from the speeches quoted in this note. Job knows God sees him. Job has discovered that God isn't predictable when it comes to controlling the destiny of an honest person. Job is confronting the end of how he and his friends and his whole culture has understood God. Later, in

Chapter 38, God says, "*Brace yourself like an adult; I will question you,*" We hear God demanding from Job, and from you and me, an adult relationship; not a dependent, God-controlled relationship.

I think that what we hear is God still speaking.

God is expecting that we will move toward the conversation and away from the immature whining and immature superstitions by which we sometimes think we can predict or control God. I think God is not warm and fuzzy, or not only warm and fuzzy.

"Brace yourself like an adult!"

Are you ready to speak with God like an adult? Does this sound like God is angry? Maybe God is angry sometimes. But in this case, can you hear the voice of God inviting us, entreating us, challenging us, and

commanding Job and us to step up to an adult relationship? I think God is saying, "Quit that other stuff and feel my gaze. Quit that other stuff and I will speak with you. Let go of those sentimental ideas of what kind of God I am and open up to me as I AM."

For many of us, this is a terrifying prospect. Let me suggest to you that it is this thrilling, dangerous prospect that is available to each of us right now. This is why church and faith are a risky business. And this is the opening through which God calls us to go. Do not be afraid, Dear Ones, but brace yourself like an adult and turn toward your God. May our turning be strong and blessed, so in turning, we come 'round right.

*Peace and Blessing,
Pastor Brad*

Green Team Update

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- Becoming more involved in Transition Framingham. The two main goals of this group are Framingham's goal to become a "green community" and helping to make the town less dependent on others in the event of a disaster.
- Providing a tree(s) and help to plant them in Framingham through the Mass ReLeaf Ministry.
- Investigating the cost of "Green Church" T-shirts.
- Possibility of a public seminar using 3 NRDC/Robert Redford videos. The alternative could be using them in a church service. Brad will check them out.

The next meeting is scheduled for August 18. Please join us after worship!

Jean Burr