

# Merry Christmas GRACE NOTES

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

## Mini Holiday Fair

December 8th and 15th  
(After church)  
Fellowship Hall



Please donate the following:

- Gifts (new or recycled)
- Gently used holiday decorations
- Wrapping paper and bows
- Small toys in good repair



*NO baked goods, used items,  
books, rummage, old stuff*

We will set up on  
Saturday, Dec. 7th, at 1:00 PM

Donations may be left in the Fellowship Hall  
(Please mark that they are for the fair)

*Refer questions to Lynn Burdett  
or Jean Burr*

Pathways Shelter  
Christmas Gifts  
*See Article  
on Page Four*



## Advent and Christmas at Grace Church



- December 1, the first Sunday in Advent, we light the Candle of Hope.
- December 8, the second Sunday in Advent, we light the Candle of Peace.
- December 15, the third Sunday in Advent, we light the Candle of Love.
- December 22, the fourth Sunday in Advent (Christmas Sunday), we light the candle of Joy.
- Christmas Eve, we will have one service at 7:00 PM, which will be a service of Candles, Carols and Communion. Please come and bring the whole family!

*Ruth Carney*

*Turn to page five for the Deacon's column and more information on Advent at Grace Church.*

## Next Step: Mission Pathways

A congregational conversation was held on November 24 to answer lingering questions about the Crossroads discernment process, the implications of moving forward with "Mission Redefinition," and the next steps moving forward on our journey of discernment as a congregation.

The plan is to engage the Hope Partnership in its "Mission Pathways" programs, which will help us dig deeply into the information about our local community, unpack the key themes opportunities for future ministry, and facilitate a retreat to help us discern our redefined mission. In addition, we will get assistance in planning the process and coaching on how to move ahead after we have redefined our mission.

Stay tuned for more information as we collaborate with Hope Partnership and the timing of events becomes more clear.

*Linda Dunbrack*

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## From the Pastor

Dear Ones,

Sometimes, we sit in our sanctuary at Grace Congregational United Church of Christ and wonder at how small in number we are. We are but a few dozen people trying to be people of the way, the way of Christ. And then we feel the presence of those of you reading this who are not in the room of a Sunday morning and we name the legacy of those who have walked the Grace Church way before us, and that changes our feeling of being small in number a bit!

Some of us wonder about those who are worshipping elsewhere. Some of us express concern that the faith community in Framingham is too fragmented and, in a sad thought, that we are apart from each other just when we could be combining our gifts and resources to make stronger churches, we are missing the chance. Others of us have noted that the variety of religious expressions in the neighborhood of Framingham is a strength, a sign of how with all our differences of background and circumstance we citizens find ourselves stepping into houses of worship and asking questions of faith and looking for a way to live in this rich, varied community. Diverse congregations make our religious landscape more interesting and resilient. How should it be? What do you want to see? Do you know what is happening in those other houses of worship? Who goes there?

Amazed and astonished, they asked, *'Are not all*

*these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.'* - Acts 2:7-11

The challenge of variety in religion has been with communities like ours for a long time. Communities have handled that variety in many ways, some of them have even been helpful. In Framingham, there are two kinds of events each year that draw people from a wide variety of religious neighborhoods to a single place for a specific religious purpose. The first is the memorial services spearheaded by veterans organizations and civic organizations. It is not unusual to find a variety of clergy helping to lead such observances. The other is the Framingham Community Thanksgiving Service. I've helped with that service for seven years now. The clergy who gathered on Tuesday, November 26 to lead the Thanksgiving service were sharing some memories as we donned our gay apparel. Some folks were trying to remember how long the shared Thanksgiving service had been a staple of the Framingham calendar. They gave up, finally, because the practice of multiple faiths joining in Thanksgiving

*Continued on page four*

## December Calendar

December 2, 9, 16  
 11:00 AM Bible Study at Coffee Loft in Marlborough

December 1 (No Cans for Communion this month)  
 9:00 AM Singers rehearse  
 10:00 AM Worship

December 2  
 7:30 PM Leadership Ministry Team

December 7  
 8:00 AM Men's Breakfast

December 8 Mini Holiday Fair  
 9:00 AM Singers rehearse  
 10:00 AM Worship  
 11:30 AM Green Team meeting

December 11  
 11:30 AM GWU Yankee Swap

December 15 Mini Holiday Fair  
 9:00 AM Singers rehearse  
 10:00 AM Worship

December 18  
 2:00 PM Worship at Carlyle House

December 22  
 9:00 AM Singers rehearse  
 10:00 AM Worship

December 24 Christmas Eve Service

December 29  
 9:00 AM Singers rehearse  
 10:00 AM Worship

January 4th Foam Collection  
 January 6th Share Epiphany Service with Plymouth and Edwards





The other day, Kermit's cousin, Freddy, paid him a visit. Freddy was really upset because the frog pond that he lives in is getting very polluted with plastic water bottles . What he soon found out was that Kermit's pond was the same way. They fussed and fumed about this for a while but finally realized that they couldn't do anything about it! (If only they could talk to "people" to make them see what they were doing!! )

Unfortunately, Kermit and Freddy can't do anything about it, but we can! The following information is from the online version of *National Geographic Kids*. (<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids>) "If your family is like many in the U. S., unloading the week's groceries includes hauling a case or two of bottled water into your home. On your way to a soccer game or activity, it's easy to grab a cold one right out of the fridge, right? But all those plastic bottles use a lot of fossil fuels and pollute the environment. In fact, Americans buy more bottled water than any other nation in the world, adding 29 billion water bottles a year to the problem. In order to make all these bottles, manufacturers use 17 million barrels of crude oil. That's enough oil to keep a million cars going for twelve months. Imagine a water bottle filled a quarter of the way up with oil. That's about how much oil was needed to produce the bottle.

Why don't more people drink water straight from the kitchen faucet? Some people drink bottled water because they think it is better for them than water out of the tap, but that's not true. In the U.S. local governments make sure water from the faucet is safe. There is also growing concern that chemicals in the bottles themselves may leach into the water.

Plastic bottle recycling can help—instead of going out with the trash, plastic bottles can be turned into items like carpeting or cozy fleece clothing. Unfortunately, for every six water bottles we use, only one makes it to the recycling bin. The rest are sent to landfills. Or, even worse, they end up as trash on the land and in rivers, lakes, and the ocean. They take many hundreds of years to disintegrate.

Remember this: Recycling one plastic bottle can save enough energy to power a 60 watt light bulb for six hours!"

(You know, I think I just heard Kermit & Freddy saying, "We couldn't have said it better!")

Jean Burr

## Volunteers Needed to Lend a Hand

(Come for an hour,  
Come for the day!)

Foam  
Recycling Day  
Saturday, January 4th  
10:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Remove all tape, labels &  
food particles from your Foam

### Green Team

- Amelia Burton is looking for old Christmas cards that she can convert into new cards to sell at GWU mini holiday fair. Income will be used to buy a "flock of chicks" for the Heifer Project. She needs cards ASAP.
  - Apple mulch: Brad obtained some squashed apples from a cider pressing. He will be starting a mulch pile and the apples will be one of the layers. The mulch will eventually be used in a front garden (by Salem End Road).
  - Next Step Living Seminar: Although there was a low turnout, the seminar was excellent with lots of useful information. **Note: If anyone uses Next Step Living for their free energy audit, mention Grace Church and they will give the church a \$10 donation.**
  - There is a proposal that we share a solar panel with Saint Andrews. Although the savings would not be significant, this would be a social versus economic decision.
  - Team members are reviewing the three UCC Green Church levels to confirm that we are still on course.
- Next meeting December 8th, following worship

Linda Hilliard

## Warm Feet for Worcester, January Sock Drive Special Collection at Epiphany Service

In January, Grace Church will be collecting NEW, men's, white athletic socks for the Worcester Fellowship, an outdoor church that serves the homeless. These are especially needed in the winter months. There will be a special collection for these items at the "Season of Sharing" Epiphany Service so put "socks" on your shopping list, if you can, and help us exceed our goal of 200 pairs!



## Pathways Shelter Christmas Gifts

Gift tags for the children of Pathways family shelter may be picked up after church on December 1st and 8th. Please return your unwrapped gift with the tag attached by December 15th. Note: No Cans for Communion in December; we'll focus on the gifts.



Mary Memmott

## From the Pastor *Continued from page two*

has been going on longer than the tenure of any current clergy types in the room.

Cantor Jodi Schechtman told a little story just at the beginning of the service. She told us about Jack and Sarah, two members of her Temple Beth Am congregation, who were irregular attendees at Shabbat services but who always seemed to attend the Interfaith Thanksgiving Service. Jodi asked them about this regularity at some point and Jack explained that both of them were survivors of the work camps, the death camps of the holocaust. They had survived and they had also seen the worst that people can do to each other. They knew what evil can result from hatred, prejudice, and intolerance. So when their beloved Framingham gathered in spite of different worship styles, theologies, histories, religions, and languages to give simple thanks together, well, they wouldn't miss it for the world.

May you find a way this season to taste the spiritual wine from a different church, even a different religion. May you then deepen your love for a community that is knit together with these varied strands so that you draw strength from what is happening behind those other sacred doors. May you be sustained by the knowledge that babies, born in the 20th century, the 21st century, or some ancient manger, have no religion, no church, and no need of any. And may your Advent prepare you for a deep and beautiful Christmas.

*Pastor Brad*

## Susan Minor to perform two concerts

Our Music Director Susan Minor will be in two performances weekend of Dec. 7th and 8th.

### • Harvard Pro Musica 2013 Holiday Concert

December 7 at 7:30 PM

under the baton of Anne Watson-Born

Piano, Susan Minor

Musical selections will include: *Gloria, Alleluia, Ave Maria, Judea, While Shepherds Watched, Sir Christemas*; other traditional holiday fare...

\$20 Adults / \$15 Students and Seniors

Harvard Unitarian Church, 9

Ayer Road, Harvard, MA

"The little white church on the hill"

### • Concord Orchestra Family Holiday Concert

51 Walden Street, Concord

Sunday, Dec. 8, 2pm & 4pm

\$20 Adults, \$5 Children

*The Snowman* Joyce Kulhawik narrates the story of a boy who builds a snowman that comes to life, featuring several boy soloists from the Fenn School choir and Susan Minor, piano.

More Music: *Farandole from L'Arlésienne Suite No. 2; White Christmas; Jingle Bells from Christmas Festival; Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*

### Grace Congregational, UCC

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## Deacons

*“For a child has been born for us,  
a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his  
shoulders; and he is named  
Wonderful Counsellor,  
Mighty God, Everlasting Father,  
Prince of Peace.”*

- Isaiah 9: 6 NRSV

People of Grace,  
We hope your Thanksgiving brought you many happy memories. And we all know there aren't any calories in the food we eat on Thanksgiving!

### See our Advent Service Schedule on page one

As December begins, so does our church year. Advent is the beginning of the church year.

We will begin our journey through Advent with Elizabeth and Zachariah. Each Sunday, we will have special readings, stories, expected and unexpected visitors, special music - well, you'll just have to be there each week.

## Grace Women United

GWU will meet at Evie McGuirk's home for our annual Yankee Swap luncheon on Dec 11th. at noon. Please RSVP to Lynn Burdett or Jean Burr. Our next meeting will be on January 8th 2014.

Lynn Burdett

## Book Club



Book Club will meet on January 22 at 10 AM. We will discuss *Mountains Beyond Mountains* by Tracy Kidder and *The Secret Keeper* by Kate Morton.

Lynn Burdett

The plants for the buddies will be at the church on December 15 for you to pick up. We are planning to go caroling possibly on the 15th or 22nd. When the date is confirmed, it will be announced in church and in the weekly e-mails from the office.

Please do not forget that we care about your wellbeing, if we can be of any help, please be in touch with one of us. Please keep our congregation in your prayers. God is with us and among us! God does and will provide!

As the winter winds begin to blow and the weather becomes increasingly cold, we wish you a blessed Christmas!

*Have hope in your heart  
Have peace in your soul  
Have love in your life  
Have joy in each moment  
Now and Always.*

May you always feel God's blessings,  
Ruth Carney  
for the Deacon Ministry Team  
Ruth Carney, Karolyne White

## Storm Closings



If we need to cancel a service or activity due to inclement weather, there will be an announcement on WCVB-TV channel 5. We will also use other sources (i.e.: e-mail, Facebook, etc) to get the word out. If there is a power failure and you cannot access TV or internet, try calling Ruth Carney.

## Faith in Action

### November FIA Meeting

- There was a brief recap of the November 2nd energy seminar with Next Step Living. It was an informative meeting, but there were only seven attending.
- *Wise Giving Magazine* is now available in the church library.
- Jean presented the idea of reassembling the Not For Anytime Players. There was much enthusiasm.
- The next FIA meeting will be January 19th.

## Grace Women United

Grace Women United has sent a check for \$100 to the Guertsens (in Holliston) to help them with shipping costs incurred to send boxes weekly to four schools in Appalachia. This should serve as a reminder to all of us when making room for this year's Christmas gifts to save gently used children's sneakers and books, and new art & school supplies so that we can additionally help these children through this wonderful couple. Any items can be left at the church, or call Jean Burr if you need them picked up. Thanks!

## Check out the Grace Church Library

Our church library has a wide array of excellent books available. There are no formal library procedures: simply come and take a book (or magazine) and feel free to leave some books (but no romance novels as space is limited). Or sit in one of the comfortable chairs and read a book in this quiet oasis.