



# GRACE NOTES

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

## Congregational Meeting – January 27, 2008

Our annual congregational budget meeting was held January 27, 2008 after worship and a light lunch. Terri Taylor opened with a devotion that included a re-statement of our core values and the importance of community. These core values were then woven throughout the meeting.

Jean Burr ran the meeting in Moderator Linda Hilliard’s absence. We reviewed, then approved, the 2007 budget meeting minutes, and then discussed the budget versus actual expenses of 2007 to further understand our budget approach to 2008.

Brad then gave a redevelopment update before we considered the 2008 budget. You can read more on that in his article below.

Brownie presented the 2008 budget and each chair had an opportunity to speak up about it if they so chose. After addressing a few questions, the congregation voted unanimously in approving the 2008 budget, including a Missions Budget that is now a tithe (10%) of our pledges. See Missions team page for more information.

We closed the meeting by singing, “Will You Let Me Be Your Servant.”

## Redevelopment Update

On Sunday, I made a presentation to the congregational meeting that included a model that arranged levels of energy for mission across time. The presentation focused on three spots on the

declining energy side of the model and then linked them to responses. The three spots on the declining energy side were

- nostalgia: people are in touch with what has worked in the past in an immediate way that makes them feel that with a good effort it can be recaptured.
- questioning/polarization: maybe we can’t go back, strong conflicts about what is the right way to go.
- falling away/low energy: people leave because the conflict just isn’t worth it, people leave because they are not energized, there are only a few pockets of spiritual energy and only small, standalone outreach.

In the presentation, I offered three corresponding responses. Organizations at the nostalgia spot pursue **renewal**. Organizations at the questioning/polarization spot pursue **revitalization**, organizations at the falling away/low energy spot pursue **redevelopment**. You are correct to infer that if an organization doesn’t pursue the appropriate response, then it will decline to the next lower energy spot and eventually the organization is dead.

Here are some descriptions for the three responses.

Renewal efforts reconnect with traditional history, values, and ways of doing things. The organization sets new goals that are in line with accepted values and practices, with modest adaptation to new circumstances. This kind of strategic plan takes about 6 months to create and 2 years to implement.

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## *From the Pastor:*

Dear Ones,

Our congregational meeting had a tone that was most pleasing and warming. We again faced the upsetting task of approving an expected-income and expected-expense budget that is out of balance. We voted to give our grand experiment another try. Hmmm. Is it *our* experiment? Well, sure! We made budget decisions and program decisions. Human effort did a lot of work to bring the budget into the clarity and focus that it has now.

So, first of all, congratulations! You came through a difficult moment with strength and unity of purpose. Second, I thank all of you who attended for your care for each other during conversations that have been difficult for this church (as for all churches) in the past. Particular thanks goes to Brownie for keeping the numbers in line, for the Stewards Ministry Team for pulling our separate budgets together, for the work of the Deacon, Christian Education, Mission, and Youth Ministry teams for bringing thoughtful work to the planning process, and to Jean Burr for leading the congregational meeting in the absence of our moderator.

On further thought, I'd like you to consider whose experiment we are trying. Actually, I'd like us to look at the way in which we are giving God's experiment another try for another year. Please say these words to yourself out loud as you read this note. "What we will do this year at Grace Congregational United Church of Christ will be the work of God."

Stunning to say it straight out isn't it? Presumptuous! It is the claim of fools, for who can know the mind of God?

When Paul wrote to the church at Corinth the first time, he described himself as a poor messenger for the Gospel of Christ. He was, he said, sent "not with eloquent wisdom." Was this false modesty? Aside from Christ himself, there was no one we know about in the early church who was as valued a messenger. To us, it certainly sounds self-

deprecating. One of the greatest writers in the Bible and the first great Christian writer and preacher says, "I know I'm not very good at this!"

What he really says is that he was a poor messenger *on purpose*. He says that the Gospel message should not and does not depend upon his eloquence, sincerity, or persuasive powers. Paul counts it as a virtue to be tongue-tied, to be unable to state things briefly, and to use confusing vocabulary. Paul counts it as a good thing to be a poor messenger. He says that wisdom, careful consideration, an eye for preservation, a good understanding of the bottom-line, good government, new technology, the latest innovations,... in short any wisdom of human beings has not saved us from ourselves. It is still true today that the wisdom of humanity has not saved humanity from inhumanity. So Paul, faced with the most powerful message ever heard by humanity sets aside the counsel of wisdom. He instead claims that he will be imprudent. He will be a fool for Christ!

So, yes, we are fools to claim we know the mind of God. Our challenge is to speak to our doubts and our doubters with a giggle and admit, "Yes, we know we're a little unrealistic, we know we're not sure of the way ahead, we know the budget is not balanced, and we know we are the cock-eyed optimists!"

And we will be saved as a group of Christians when we are foolish for Christ and passionate about following Jesus as Jesus leads us

- into mission that serves and at the same time builds relationships,
- into tasks that deliver the desired outcome and at the same time nourish the participants,
- into fellowship that shares the coffee and at the same time deepens us.

With Confidence that the Grace of God is Intended for the People of Grace,  
Peace and Blessing,  
Pastor Brad

## *Check It Out!*

Dear Grace Friends,  
I am delighted to announce the launch of my weblog, "Growing Edges: Humor and Inspiration for Daily Living" located at <http://growingedges.typepad.com> ! I add a new article/essay three to four times weekly. I cover many topics, but most are related to parenting and women's issues. Please visit me at my website and enjoy what it has to offer. I'll see you soon at <http://growingedges.typepad.com>.

May the New Year bring you and your loved ones an abundance of blessings!!

PEACE,  
Gretchen

For those interested in reading the daily lectionary, a passage from the Bible for study and contemplation for each day, try <http://www.macucc.org/education/lectionary.htm>

## Ministry Teams

### Deacons MT

Ruth Carney, Chair  
Joanne Larkins  
George Tynes  
Karolyne White

[deacons@gracechurchucc.org](mailto:deacons@gracechurchucc.org)

People of Grace,

Thank you to one and all who stayed on January 13, 2008 to help with the “De-Greening” of the church. The many hands made quick work of putting all the Advent and Christmas decorations away. From the youngest to oldest, there was something for everyone to do. Thank you again for your devotion to Grace!

We are soon to begin our journey through Lent – Ash Wednesday is February 6, 2008. Come to this contemplative and intimate 7:00 PM service that begins the Lenten Journey which leads us to the glories of Easter and the resurrected Christ.

We are very pleased to announce that Jackie Mague is the new Buddy Coordinator. We thank her for her willingness to take on this role.

### Stewards MT

Jean Burr  
Lynn Burdett  
Frank Carney  
Judy Sebastian  
Tim Taylor

## Deacons

We are still in need of volunteers to be a lay reader, usher, greet or to prepare and serve coffee for the fellowship time after worship on Sunday. (Thank you to all who have signed up or just pitched in.) Please take a moment to sign up for one of these opportunities. You will find the sign up sheets on the bookcase that holds the hymnals and Bibles.

Please do not forget that we care about your wellbeing and want to walk with you celebrating your joys, holding you in your sorrows, and just being there when you need us. God is with us and among us. God does and will provide.

*May you always feel God's blessings,  
The Deacons Ministry Team*

### **Lay Worship Planning Workshop and Service**

In 2007, we had a few “Lay Led Worship Services.” Normally, we would have had a guest preacher, but due to time constraints none were available. Ruth Carney put these services together for us on a short notice. The deacons asked her if she would be willing to lead a

workshop on how to do this and she said, “Yes.”

If you have ever been curious about:

\*What goes into planning a service?

\*How can someone do this without going to seminary?

\*How can *I* possibly do this?

– This workshop is for you!

We will gather after worship on February 10, 2008 and plan the worship service for February 24, 2008. We are leaving an extra week between the planning and the service in case we choose to meet again on February 17<sup>th</sup> to do any fine tuning. In being part of this workshop, you may choose to participate in the service on the 24<sup>th</sup> or not. We will have some fun, share thoughts, perhaps gain a little more spirituality, and find out that we can do quite a bit more than we think we can. We expect that the workshop will be about two hours, so it would be a good idea to bring a bag lunch if you are used to eating early on Sunday. See you at the workshop!

## Stewards

An exhaust fan has been installed in the downstairs rest room. Tim Taylor has put in two programmable thermostats and will be doing two more. The Stewards were happy to hear that Grace Women United has voted to add enough money to the kitchen fund to have vinyl flooring installed in both the kitchen and the kitchenette.

The kitchen fund was established last year at their kitchen shower, and has grown to \$840 thanks to some additional gifts. The women will be having an occasional fund raiser for this purpose and ask that we all support them in this project.

## **Ministry Teams**

### Missions MT

Eleanor Crawford  
Mary Memmott  
[mission@gracechurchucc.org](mailto:mission@gracechurchucc.org)

### **February Cans for Communion – Feb. 3rd**

This month we are looking for: SPAGHETTI SAUCE, PASTA, CEREAL, WHITE RICE, and MAC AND CHEESE. Donations go to MetroWest Harvest Food Pantry in Framingham. Please contact Mary Memmott if you would like to help deliver our collection.

### **Warm Feet for Worcester – Wrap-Up**

In the month of January we collected NEW, men's, white athletic socks for the Worcester Fellowship, an outdoor church that serves the homeless. At press time, we were just a few packages short of collecting 200 pairs of socks! You can still bring in socks (unopened packages, please) on Sunday, Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup> to help us reach this fantastic goal. Thank you to our friends from Edwards and Plymouth Churches for helping us with this collection at the Epiphany Service.

### **Sunday, Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup>, Joint Missions/Youth Trip to Worcester**

On Sunday, Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup>, a group of folks from Grace will deliver our sock collection to the Worcester

### Christian Ed. MT

Rob Lovewell  
Daleen Perkins  
Ronda Yeomans  
[christianed@gracechurchucc.org](mailto:christianed@gracechurchucc.org)

## **Mission**

Fellowship outdoor service (on Worcester Common), in the early afternoon. (You can find out more about the Worcester Fellowship church and their ministry to the homeless at their website [www.worcesterfellowship.org](http://www.worcesterfellowship.org).) We'll leave from Grace around noon and bring sandwiches to share for an outdoor lunch and service in Worcester 12:45-2:00 p.m. All are welcome, and we will car-pool. If you'd like to join us, please contact Terri Taylor or Mary Memmott for details. We promise we'll be back long before the Super Bowl!

### **Calling All Super-Sandwich Makers**

Want to make a difference on Super Bowl Sunday? We will be bringing lunch to the homeless at Worcester Fellowship outdoor church on Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup>. We could still use a few more people to sign up to provide individually wrapped sandwiches (especially meat and/or cheese, no mayo, please) for the lunch, or soft fruit (oranges, bananas, applesauce with spoons) or soft cookies. You don't have to join the trip to Worcester to help make the sandwiches, and all the food will be delivered (along with our sock collection) that afternoon with the blessings and prayers of Grace to some very needy folks in Worcester. Contact Mary Memmott or Terri Taylor for details.

### **Missions Budget Update**

The Missions Team requested a Missions budget for 2008 that is a "tithe" (10%) of the total pledges received. This tithe will go to supporting the UCC through dues and the wider mission program, to our community through projects such as the Walk to Prevent Homelessness and Stearns Farm, along with our worldwide mission through our continued support of Susan Oksens Frans, missionary in Indonesia. None of these projects are new to Grace Church, but several had been cut from the budget as we faced the sale of Union Ave. A tithe recognizes that a significant amount of our "time, talent and treasure" as a church must go toward reaching out to others, if we are truly to "show we are Christians by our love," as we sang at the Congregational Meeting. In that spirit, the Missions budget was approved as part of the unanimous approval of the budget at January 27<sup>th</sup>'s meeting. Your small but spirited Missions Ministry Team looks forward to using this increase in funds for work in 2008 that will uplift us all. Thank you all for your support!

Blessings of grace,  
Eleanor Crawford, Chair  
Mary Memmott  
Missions Ministry Team

## **Christian Education**

The CE Team thundered out of the starting gates (wait, let me rephrase that.) We began 2008 enthusiastically and with lots of energy conjured out of thin air thus evidencing the Holy Spirit at work again!

Since the Bible is the framework within which we teach many spiritual lessons, January's CE lessons have been focused on "Bible 101." We are teaching much specific information about the Bible itself and the

## CEMT, Continued

chronological order of various significant events. This is to provide the children with a road map of sorts by which they may orient their religious education. The last Bible 101 class will be February 10. Many thanks to Mary, Daleen, Ronda, and Karolyne for leading these lessons.

Also on Feb. 10, we will vary from our standard format just this once, by having the children start service with their families in the worship space downstairs at 10AM. This will allow some brief, but specific, participation at the start of the service prior to them proceeding upstairs to the function room/parlor for their final Bible 101 lesson.

The "Come Join the Circle" curriculum was so well received for the Fall semester that it was agreed that we would purchase the lessons for the spring semester. The spring

curriculum has arrived and is ready for use starting in mid-February. Multiple copies are available so that teachers may take the curriculum out of the building if they wish to prepare lessons elsewhere. Teachers and helpers are encouraged to read through the lessons as soon as possible prior to teaching since this curriculum provides such a wealth of information and so many interesting possibilities regarding lesson plans.

In order to celebrate and support all teachers, helpers and potential teachers and helpers throughout Grace Church, CE is sponsoring an "Edu-Fest" possibly on **Wed. Feb. 13 at 7:30PM** immediately after the Wednesday evening service. The idea is to nurture teachers and helpers by feeding them yummy, delicious and/or healthy snacks and drinks. The evening will also provide a forum for the exchange of ideas

regarding effective teaching methods. Participants are encouraged to share "what works for them" so that all may benefit. We especially appreciate the input of any who actually have taught outside the church setting. The first few curriculum lessons will be used as examples with specific methods suggested. All are welcome!

CE is excited to announce many opportunities for teaching and helping in February and the upcoming months. Specifically, we need teachers and helpers for the Primary and Junior classes for Feb. 17, and for Feb 24 we need a Story Reader, a leader and a helper for this multi-age session. We also need volunteers for March, April and May. Don't miss this chance to make a difference in the life of a child. Phone lines are now open. Call 508-877-7504 today! Ronda Yeomans is eagerly awaiting your call!

## *Grace Youth Group*

**Sun Feb 3rd** - Socks and service: We will be delivering sandwiches and the socks collected during January to the Outdoor Church in Worcester along with the Missions team. We will make sandwiches at Grace at 11:30 and leave at 12 for Worcester. We will return to Grace around 3:30 (in plenty of time for the Super Bowl:-))

**Sun Feb 24th** - 1-3pm : Gather to join in fellowship and games and start discussion about what would be a meaningful worship service for you (time of day, content, music - anything that sparks your imagination)

**Fri Mar 7th:** Jeremy Camp and Toby Mac concert at Lowell Auditorium. Leave Grace at 5 pm, grab supper along the way. Return around 10:30pm. Tickets are \$23, please let Terri or Brad know if you will NOT be able to make it.

**Sun Mar 16th** - 1-3pm, start talking/playing worship band. Bring your instruments and music for some jam time. We will have some music to try out for a youth service.

**Sat Mar 22 - Sun Mar 23rd** - tentative - Youth Lock-in and Easter Sunrise Service. We will "camp" overnight at Grace and design a sunrise Easter Service followed by breakfast.

Grace Youth Group is open to all youth in grades 6-12. Please come join us, and bring a friend!

Peace and blessings,

Terri and Brad  
Terri phone: 508-229-8364 or cell 508-353-8303  
Brad phone: 508-380-7733

## *What's Lurking in YOUR Closet? – Grace's List*

Remember Grace's Closet? Have you heard of Craig's List? Well, Faith in Action is taking the best of these two worlds and is creating our very own,

unique program—a combination of both. Grace's List will include those "gently used" items, which you and I no longer need, but are too good to send to

## Grace's List, Continued

the landfill. (Complete descriptions and, perhaps, pictures, will be included.)

Did you upgrade your computer? Camera? TV? Would you like to recycle your couch or easy chair so that you can get a new one to match your new wallpaper? How about that beautiful "mother-of-the-bride dress" or any of the 13 bridesmaid dresses you still have? Although we will be asking that a minimum of one-third of the price be given to the church, the seller will be asked to set the price and

the "split" as he/she wishes. Watch for the unveiling of the list in the church fellowship hall, and an abbreviated one in the next issue of Grace Notes. (Our list will be as long and varied as we can make it!)

Equally important, for those in the market for a used car, DVD player, space heater, etc., watch Grace's List for an opportunity to purchase it, help a member/friend, and contribute to the church, all at the same time!

## *Come Join Us*

\* Grace Women United will be meeting on **Thursday, February 14th** instead of Wednesday February 13. This is our annual soup luncheon and we would like to invite *all* women of Grace to attend. We gather at **11:30 a.m.** for lunch and then will have a business meeting. Please RSVP to 508-872-7863 so we can plan our food. If you forget to call, just show up. We will be glad to see you.

\* Women's Lectio Group will meet Monday **February 11 at 7:30 p.m.** at the church. All women are invited to attend and

share fellowship as we explore the Bible in this spiritually personal and reflective manner. No preparation is necessary and new comers are always welcome. For more information, please contact Terri Taylor at [terriktaylor@comcast.net](mailto:terriktaylor@comcast.net) or Laura Buck at 508-875-4781.

\* Gather after worship on **February 10** for a workshop on how to plan and lead a worship service. It's easier than you think so come join us! More details provided under the Deacons Ministry Team notes.

\* We invite you to join us on **Ash Wednesday, February 6 at 7:00 p.m.** for an introspective service to lead us into Lent. Hope to see you there.

\* Come to Edu-fest, a helpful teaching/sharing workshop to be run by CE. Potential date-**Feb. 13** at approx. **7:30 p.m.** Yummy treats and beverages provided.

\* The first Redevelopment Team meeting is **Friday Feb. 1 at 10:30 a.m.** at the church. All are welcome.

## *This and That*

### **Fashion Forward**

Do you need a new T-shirt? Well of course you do! Update your gym shirt, hang out and watch football (go Pats!) shirt, Saturday errands shirt, bathing suit cover up shirt, whichever shirt you need to replace (you know there is at least ONE that needs retiring) to make room in your closet for the attractive navy blue Grace Church T-shirt. Summer will be too late and you'll miss out so pick up a T-shirt today. Don't forget, while it's cold they can be worn over long sleeved shirts for a totally cool, modern look, all the while keeping you warm. (And some say they are slenderizing to boot.) All sizes are currently still available but we'll be running out of Large soon, so get one while you can.

- Youth sizes (S, M, L) \$8
- Adult sizes (S, M, L, XL) \$10
- Adult size XXL \$12.



**In Case of Bad Weather!** Winter is here and in New England, that means we could be blessed with bitter temps, rain, snow, and even an occasional sunny mild day (sometimes all in the same day.) Due to Mom Nature's unpredictability in the snow and ice department, we are again connected to WCVB, Channel 5. If a service or event needs to be cancelled because of weather, tune to **Channel 5** for our cancellation listing.

## *Faith In Action*

### **Grace's List**

We are excited about our new project, Grace's List. See the explanation of this elsewhere in this issue and watch for further details.

## FIA, Continued

### Teddy Bears Found Homes



Thank you to everyone who donated stuffed animals to our annual bear project. We received nearly 50 and have named & tagged each one. Some went to our at-home members, and we have given most of the smaller ones to Mr. & Mrs. Geurtsen of Holliston, who send care packages to children in Appalachia. They have been doing this for 12 years

and were happy for our help. They are also looking for children's books and art supplies. Faith-in-Action will be happy to accept any such items and deliver them to the Geurtsens.



### Recycling Reminder

A reminder about our recycling project—plastic bags and foil are *not* acceptable. Also, **please rinse** any containers such as coffee cups, cream or milk cartons, and soft drink bottles and cans.

## ***Redevelopment Update – Continued from Front Page***

Revitalization efforts explore and challenge norms, assumptions, beliefs, values, habits, and expectations. The church revisits the shared understanding of organizational mission and evaluates action choices in terms of mission and current context. Revitalization challenges the present structure, including the building, people in power, and the organization chart. 2 to 4 years.

Redevelopment is the strongest medicine. This involves almost starting again with prayer, discernment, and Bible study. This involves imagining a church without a building, without a history, without a legacy. What would the purpose be if “just continuing the church” does not generate sufficient energy or attract new folks? What would ministry be? Where would we gather? What would we need? What kind of leadership? How would we celebrate God? How would we be the Body of Christ? 4 to 6 years.

Please note that the material in this article and this part of the presentation came to me from Rev. Betsy

Waters, Redevelopment Pastor at The First Church in Marlborough, UCC, and I am grateful to her for sharing. While challenging and intriguing, the model that suits Marlborough may not suit Grace.

In fact, Rev. Betsy's is one among many ways of looking at redevelopment. I shared another with you in the June 2007 Annual Report (copies of my letter are on the publications rack on the shelf in our fellowship space.) The Redevelopment Task Team will have the job of settling on the primary model, the primary way we will frame our work to take Grace Congregational into its future.

The Redevelopment Task Team is forming now. We will be an open team that can be joined at any time. It will be a team that will work, perhaps split into further teams, perhaps lead our congregation in shared study.

The first meeting is **Friday, February 1, at 10:30 AM** at the church.

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#### Mailing Address:

Grace Congregational Church, UCC  
PO Box 1481  
Framingham, MA 01701

#### Pastor

Brad Watters [pastor@gracechurchucc.org](mailto:pastor@gracechurchucc.org)

#### Moderator

Linda Hilliard [moderator@gracechurchucc.org](mailto:moderator@gracechurchucc.org)

#### Christian Education

Ronda Yeomans [christianed@gracechurchucc.org](mailto:christianed@gracechurchucc.org)

#### Deacons

Ruth Carney [deacon@gracechurchucc.org](mailto:deacon@gracechurchucc.org)

#### Mission

Ellie Crawford [mission@gracechurchucc.org](mailto:mission@gracechurchucc.org)

#### Stewards

Jean Burr [steward@gracechurchucc.org](mailto:steward@gracechurchucc.org)

#### Church address:

76 Salem End Road  
Framingham, MA 01702  
508-872-3342

#### Member at Large

Terri Taylor [atlarge@gracechurchucc.org](mailto:atlarge@gracechurchucc.org)

#### Office Administrator:

Kab Rabinowitz [office@gracechurchucc.org](mailto:office@gracechurchucc.org)

#### Music Director

Susan Minor [musicdirector@gracechurchucc.org](mailto:musicdirector@gracechurchucc.org)

#### Missionary in Indonesia

Susan Frans [sefrans@kupang.wasantara.net.id](mailto:sefrans@kupang.wasantara.net.id)

#### Websites:

<http://www.gracechurchucc.org>  
[www.macucc.org](http://www.macucc.org) (Mass Conf.)  
[www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org) (UCC)