

GRACE NOTES

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

World Day of Prayer March 2nd • Edwards Church

At our organizational meeting at Edwards Church, it was decided that instead of having World Day of Prayer on a Friday at night, we would be really different and have it on a Saturday... not in the morning to interfere with parents taking kids to sports events, but at 4:00PM. Thus, if people don't want to stay for the refreshments, they can get home before dark. However, there will be a light meal of soup, bread and cheese.

The event will be hosted on March 2nd by Edwards Church and (the church that meets there on Saturdays) the Community of Saint Luke.

This year's World Day of Prayer will include an open table eucharistic celebration at which all are welcome (with communion for all). The program was written by the women of France - "I Was a Stranger and You Welcomed Me." This program calls for 15 speakers as well as ushers and registrars.

The WDP committee would like to know how many plan to attend and what churches are represented. The contact people at Edwards are: Ginnie Hatch or Debbie Clark or me at Grace.

Judy Sebastian

Lenten Carbon Fast

As Ash Wednesday approaches, consider participating in the Ecumenical Lenten Carbon Fast. Sign up for daily emails to reduce your use of carbon-based energy at www.macucc.org/carbonfast. Also available through Facebook, the Lenten Carbon Fast helps us integrate reductions and other changes in our energy use. We will put the links up on the Grace webpage.

Mary Memmott

Congregational Meeting held on January 27th

- Brad reviewed the pamphlet "Our Treasure for the World," which is a summary of our Fall 2012 congregational conversations.
- Linda Dunbrack, on behalf of the Leadership Team, recommended that we apply for the UCC-sponsored program: Crossroads MA (First Steps, New Beginnings). The program provides a process to move a church toward discerning, "Given our resources, passions, and skills, what is God calling us to do?" The team was enthusiastic about the potential of this program for Grace Church at this particular time. The program begins in March and ends with "a bold decision" by September. The cost would be \$2800. The congregation approved participation in Crossroads.
- Pastor Brad's contract was extended to June 2014.
- Following our long tradition of sharing financial information, the centerpiece of the meeting was a review of our 2012 financial experience and our current financial statement. Tim Taylor presented this information in his usual slideshow, ably assisted by Meghan Taylor on the control board. Tim also presented the proposed budget for 2013. People proposed some amendments to the budget and, after discussion, the congregation

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From the Pastor

Dear Ones,

God says to the snow, 'Fall on the earth,' and to the rain shower, 'Be a mighty downpour.'

Job 37:6

How about it? Do you see God's hand in the snow? Or in the cold? Do you pray to, sing about, worship and love a God who manages the flow of rivers and the birth of spring seedlings? Or are you someone who sees God as the one who set the whole thing up and then just let it take care of itself? Are there other ways to think about God and our world?

I find my curiosity is stronger about how weather in one place leads to weather in another than I am about the choices made by a divine power. So, we have to count me as someone who doesn't really accept that if I pray for a sunny day for the church picnic that God will hear my prayer and act on it to make the sun shine. And when the sun does shine and I thank God that we can still go on the picnic, I'm not actually saying thanks for a favor. I'm saying something different.

There is a narrowness in how we deal with facts and stories. Too often we look to find the one essential truth about an event or an encounter or a presentation or book. What's the one take-away from this story? Just give me the gist. Can I read the Cliff Notes please?

It turns out that in order to initiate "the flight or fight" response, conscious beings need to assess stim-

uli to determine danger or safety. Survival depends upon being able to make lots of snap decisions, true when living in a wilder world and true today (think of driving Route 9!) Through our constant millennia of adapting, we are pretty good at it. Discerning the kernel of information we need to decide what to do quickly is a good skill to have. There is danger in assuming that we have correctly perceived the important kernel of course. I'm thinking in this note about the dangerous habit that the kernel is all we need. A comedian recently pointed out that the intense cold of this January proved to him that climate science about global warming is bunk. His humorous pose found the correct kernel - it's cold outside so bundle up - but assumed there wasn't anything more useful to be learned after that.

Much of what is meaningful about God in our lives is beyond the kernel we need to get through the grocery store aisle. We choose, as people of Grace Church, to dig deeper, to move sideways through meaning, to find out more.

The words "prayer" and "thanks" are words that may seem simple to define and to use. Getting at the kernel idea is not obscure. But there are worlds of subtlety and power to be visited and lived in such words!

When I thank God for the sunshine or the rain or the snow, I am not, as I said earlier, acknowledging a nice thing God did for me. That would probably

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February Calendar

February 2
800 AM Men's Breakfast Group

February 3
9:00 AM Singers rehearse
10:00 AM Worship
11:30 AM Green Team Meeting

February 10
9:00 AM Singers rehearse
10:00 AM Worship
11:30 AM Faith in Action meeting

February 13
11:30 AM GWU meeting
7:00 PM Ash Wednesday

February 16
7:30 PM Stewards' meeting

February 17 First Sunday in Lent
9:00 AM Singers rehearse
10:00 AM Worship

February 27
10:00 AM Book Club

February 24 Second Sunday in Lent
9:00 AM Singers rehearse
10:00 AM Worship



Kermit's Korner

Kermit says: "It's not easy to be green!"

We as a Church are trying to:

- Recycle and buy minimally packed goods as much as possible.
- Replace standard light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs.
- Plug air leaks in windows and doors to increase energy efficiency.
- Walk, bike, carpool or use public transportation when ever possible.

Most of these suggestions are easy.

- Research our cleaning products to see if they are environmentally safe.
- Wash clothes in cold or warm water, not hot.
- Install low-flow shower heads to use less water.
- Run the dishwasher only when full and don't use heat to dry dishes.
- Replace old appliances with energy efficient models.
- Adjust your thermostat - lower in winter, higher in summer.
- Stand up for a cause and send letters to Congress and the President of the United States when there is an issue you believe in and that requires your efforts. Maybe something like Hydraulic Fracking or an large oil pipe line that runs across precious lands.

It's not always easy to be green.

Nancy Brown

Christian Education

A sincere "Thank You" to all those who taught or helped to teach the members of our faith community this past month whether through formal lesson or example. The Sunday School calendar is unusual in February this year. February 3 and 10 will be intergenerational with the children participating in worship throughout the service. Sunday School classes will resume on Feb. 17 and 24. Since these are also the weekends surrounding February vacation week, please let Ronda or Mary know if your family will be away either weekend. These help us estimate attendance and plan supplies accordingly.

At the annual meeting, the Stewards Ministry Team reminded us that the children of Grace Church once raised \$125.28. They raised this money to use in a way decided by the children to either in some way beautify the church space or grounds, or in some activity chosen by the children. Please mention this to your children and encourage them to think about how the money might best be spent. We plan to discuss this during upcoming Sunday School times and come to some decision on the matter. Thank you.

Teachers and helpers are still needed for upcoming Sunday School classes. Please contact Ronda or Mary if you are available and willing to help or teach. If you have never taught or assisted before, we are happy to support you in the acquisition of this skill set. Thank you.

Ronda Yeomans

Green Team Update



Our meeting on January 10 discussed how to get an energy audit of the church building. It was decided to contact Mass Save to find out what our options are.

The remaining portion of the meeting centered on how environmentally safe our cleaning products are. We discovered it was not an easy question to answer. Questions such as: Contents?, Does it do what is expected?, How it's produced and packaged.

To start, a "green catalog" will be ordered. In order to provide for save traveling and improved attendance, it was decided to have our monthly meetings after Sunday worship service.

Our next meeting will be February 3 immediately after church.

Congregational Meeting

Continued from page one

approved the amendments. Among the votes taken on spending, including some additions to the budget, were votes expressive of the heart of who we are as a church and what we hope to accomplish in the coming year. Here are the examples:

- The congregation voted to raise the missions allocation from 2012's 11% to 12% of 2013 pledges, continuing to pave our way into a deeper response to the world's needs.
- We voted to add the \$2800 fee for the Crossroads program, committing ourselves as we have in the past to boldly face important decisions.
- We adjusted the allocation for an interior design project, expressing our intention to dramatically improve our building's graciousness, hospitality, and welcome.

Missions Ministries

Thank you to everyone who came to “In Transition 2.0” in January.

Several Grace church members are already involved with Transition Framingham, and have found that they match well with our “Level Two” Green Congregation. If you are ready to help Framingham “transition” to a more sustainable and resilient future, please save March 2nd. The agenda will include speakers, networking time and an “open space” meeting to discuss how to help Framingham better meet the challenges of economic instability, rising and volatile fuel prices, and extreme weather. Light breakfast, lunch, cake, speakers, kids’ activities, and plenty of interaction, humor, and creativity will make this a memorable morning. Contact Aaron Dunbrack or Mary Memmott for more information.

I ♥ Framingham Celebration
sponsored by
Transition Framingham
Framingham High Cafeteria
Sat., March 2nd,
9:30 am - 1:30 pm

Faith in Action

Faith In Action will meet following worship on Sunday, February 10. Please stay for a brainstorming conversation and be part of a productive and faithful spring planning session!

Grace Women United

GWU will meet on Wed, February 13th at 11:30AM Bring your lunch; dessert and coffee will be served.

Book Club



February 27th meeting we will be discussing *IN THE HEART OF THE SEA* by Nathaniel Philbrick (it is the story of the fate of the *ESSEX*.)

On March 27th we will be discussing *THE RED HOUSE* by Sarah Messer. This is a memoir of the history of the house and her connection to living in it.

Meetings are held in the church library at 10:00AM and are open to all readers.

Lynn Burdett

If the weather is bad

If you look outside at the weather and you wonder if we have canceled a service or activity, tune to WCRB channel 5 for our listing. We will also use other sources (i.e.: email, Facebook, etc) to get the word out. If there is a power failure and you cannot access TV or internet, there is always the telephone (I have a landline so you can call me at home). I will be away February 10 and 17, so if you have a question on either of those Sundays, please contact Pastor Brad.

Ruth Carney

Altar Flowers

If you would like to provide flowers for the altar, contact 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. If there is a special event in the life of Grace that you would like lifted up and acknowledged with flowers, let Ruth know and she will arrange it. (We have funds for this purpose.)

From the Pastor *Continued from page two*

be the kernel idea of “thanks.” Beyond that kind of “thanks” is something more like appreciation, although that is a cold word for what I feel. The thankfulness I feel is delight, admiration, surprise, song, brightness, lift, curiosity, and on, and on. It is not a pleasantry nor a statement of theological cause and effect. It is in the moment, it is attention to what this world is and how all of it is as good a gift as anyone has ever had - ever.

The poetry of the Book of Job is one of the places where we can see another way that God is involved in the rain and snow, beyond choosing and cause and effect. Can you read that verse in this way, this paraphrase?

“Go ahead, be what you really are! Snow, fall on the earth! And you, rain, be a mighty downpour!”

I hear the God who delights in this world. I understand this is the God who loves this world and hopes

that we do too.

And then there’s this too. Knowledge of how things work, or more accurately, knowing that some people know something of how things like weather and physics work, should not remove God from your thoughts and your conversation. I suggest that the more you know, the more you know you don’t know. The more you learn, the more humble you should grow. After all:

“Have you entered the storehouses of the snow or seen the storehouses of the hail, ...?”

Job 38:22

Peace and Blessing,
Pastor Brad

People of Grace,

Our weather has been varying from the beginnings of spring-like warmth to bone-chilling cold with some light snow mixed in. Our prayers are always that you are safe and cared for.

As February is African American History Month, I would like to share the following:

What's important - On February 4, 1968, exactly two months before Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated, he delivered his last sermon at Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church. In it, he described his preferences for his own funeral. He didn't want people to mention his Nobel Peace Prize, his other awards or where he went to school; none of that was important, he said. Instead, he wanted his eulogist to say King "tried to give his life serving others" and "tried to love somebody."

In that sermon, King also said "everybody can serve," regardless of background or educational level. The only requirements, he said, were "a heart full of grace" and "a soul generated by love."

I would like to reiterate: "everybody can serve," the only requirements, "a heart full of grace" and "a soul generated by love."

Very soon we will journey into the Lenten Season. This is a reflective time where we put away our Alleluias until Easter. Lent is the fourth season of the Christian year (Advent, Christmastide, Epiphany, Lent). Its length is the 40 days preceding Easter Day, not counting Sundays. This means Lent always begins on a Wednesday, known as Ash Wednesday. Lent commemorates Jesus' fast and temptation in the wilderness of Judea Province, which, according to the Gospel, lasted 40 days. Just as Jesus confronted his temptations during these 40 days, Lent helps Christians focus on our most basic need as sinners: forgiveness. Do you seek forgiveness in your life - giving,

receiving, needing? For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. (Matthew 7:8 and Luke 11: 10 NRSV)

Last year in Lent, we tried a few different services - some will be repeated this year:

- Ash Wednesday - February 13, 7:00 PM
- 1st Sunday in Lent - February 17
- 2nd Sunday in Lent - February 24
- 3rd Sunday in Lent - March 3
(Communion Service with Cans for Communion)
- 4th Sunday in Lent - March 10
(Communion Service with Cans for Communion)
- Palm Sunday - March 17 Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. We will be having this service one week earlier than the calendar indicates.
- Passion Sunday - March 24, we will re-hear the passion story with many of the readings from Tennebrae. All "buddies" can pick up the Easter gift plants for the people they visit.
- Maundy Thursday - March 28, we will again have a Seder Meal (time to be determined).
- Easter Sunday - March 31, 2013, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ with communion and we will be bringing the Alleluias back to worship.

We will also be having a Lenten Prayer Practice with "Prayer Pals" every Sunday in Lent through Easter. Please see the article on page six of this issue of *Grace Notes*.

Please do not forget that we care about your well-being, 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!

*May you always feel God's blessings,
Ruth Carney*

Deacons: Ruth Carney, Karolyne White

P. S. "All you need is love. But a little chocolate now and then doesn't hurt."

- Charles M. Schulz

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We are having a Lenten Prayer Practice!

To some, Lent means giving up something - usually something that you like (sweets) or do (going to the movies) or a habit that is unhealthy (smoking). This Lenten season, we are asking you to add something - a Lenten Prayer Practice!

Each Sunday in Lent, up to and including Easter, we will have "Prayer Pals." When you come to worship, there will be a small card with a prayer request on one side. This prayer request will list a celebration or more likely a concern that has happened that week and everyone will have the same prayer request. On the opposite side of the card, we invite you to write your own name and place that card in a Prayer Basket if you want to participate in this Lenten prayer practice. When we ask for prayer celebrations and concerns during the service, we will pass the basket around. If you have put a card in, take a card (avoiding your own) back out. We want you to take the card home with you and pray for the person within our congregation listed along with the weekly prayer request.

Your prayer for the person, let's call him Jeremiah D, can be as simple as "God, please watch over Jeremiah today" or as extensive as you feel called to do, and whatever you feel appropriate for the pre-printed request. We just ask that you pray daily for both.

Each Sunday you will get a new card with a new name and request. You may pray just for the listings on the new card and, if you wish, you can also continue to pray for the people and events on your previous cards. Also, if you wish, you can tell your Prayer Pal at the end of each week that you have been praying for him/her. We are a small congregation and assume that everyone knows everyone else, but if you get a card and are not sure of who that is, please speak to me and I will point out that person to you.

The power of prayer can be transforming for those we pray for and for ourselves. Please enthusiastically join in this Lenten Prayer Practice!

Peace and Blessings, Ruth Carney

The Work of Christmas

While February will see us enter the season of Lent, we Christians are always embedded in the ongoing season of Christmas, as it says in the poem below. Dr. Howard Thurman was an influential author, philosopher, theologian, educator and civil rights leader. He was Dean of Theology and the chapels at Howard University and Boston University for more than two decades, wrote 20 books, and in 1944 helped found the first racially integrated, multicultural church in the United States (The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, San Francisco.) He wrote "The Work of Christmas" as a poem. We also know it rewritten slightly and expanded into a song, "I Am the Light of the World," 584 in our New Century Hymnal, by Jim Strathdee.

*When the song of the angels
is stilled,
When the star in the sky
is gone,
When the kings and princes
are home,
When the shepherds are back
with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:*

*To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers,
To make music in the heart.*