

GRACE NOTES

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

Volume 16
Number 2
February 2014

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All Encouraged to Attend Grace's "Future" Retreat on April 11, 12

Save these dates: April 11 and 12! Whatever might get in the way, plan ahead. Ask the Leadership Team to arrange a ride. Request time off from work. Plan your travel for different days. Ask teammates to bring your kids to their games and activities. Ask your extended family to bump the family party until Sunday.

Please. Do what you have to do to come to the UCC Conference Center for this retreat. Please come even if you have just started to come, or only come occasionally. We need all hands on deck, and the input of those who are on the edges of the congregation is absolutely critical for the success of the retreat.

Here is the schedule:

Friday	7:00 - 8:30pm	A Time of Spiritual Preparation
Saturday	9:00am - Noon	Learning from our Church's Neighbors
Saturday	Noon - 1:15pm	Lunch Break
Saturday	1:00 - 4:00pm	Identifying the Future Story and Steps to Get There

Why is this retreat so important? The purpose of this retreat is to set the trajectory for the future of our congregation. This retreat will lay groundwork for many key decisions in the church in 2014 and beyond, including ministries, staffing, and building. There will be no "do-overs," or revisiting the major decisions that are made on this retreat. That is the point of inviting everyone well in advance.

Grace Webinar on Community Demographics Planned for Early March

The next phase of our congregation's Mission and Ministry Planning is going to involve thorough research of our church's community. The overriding question in this phase is, "Who is our neighbor?" Without understanding our neighbors, our church cannot clearly discern God's preferred future for the congregation.

Note: Webinars are conference events conducted over a computer screen. One presenter is able to talk and show images to many receivers.

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Congregational Meeting Coverage: Page Three

From the Pastor

Dear Ones,

"... and he laid his hands on each of them and cured them."
Luke 4:40

Have you unplugged from Christmas? What's that mean to you? What stories do you tell at Christmas that you don't tell at the beginning of February? I'm not suggesting that you should be telling stories about shepherds and annunciations and leading stars. I'm just wondering if you have been able to keep the best impulses of Christmas alive in your life thus far into the new year.

One of those Christmastime impulses led a bunch of us to go caroling in December. In case you haven't heard that story, here's one part of it.

Terri Taylor is attending Andover Newton Theological School and one of her classmates is now a chaplain in Wrentham at the Wrentham Developmental Center, a community for adults with developmental disabilities. Chaplain Liz Brimm invited us to come caroling. We went in three or four carloads! The building we visited had two apartments on each of four floors. Each apartment was home to three to five adults and each apartment had three or four professional caregivers. Few of the residents speak or move easily. The apartments were warm and decorated for the season.

We were a little shy and a lot curious. I was certainly curious. The "cottages" of which we were visiting one are the remnants of the state school at Wrentham where people with certain disabilities were housed, put away. That history is not ancient or happy. So I, at least, felt the weight of that history and felt some tension about our visit.

We were greeted and ushered into the first apartment where our first sight was a woman in a wheelchair with wide eyes and strong, gesticulating arms. As we shuffled into the apartment, we kind of hung together - mostly because we were looking for where to stand to sing our carols - except for Susan Spaulding. Susan walked right over to the (somewhat startling looking) woman in the wheel chair and took her hand and said, "Hello, dear, hello!"

I'd like to tell you that the woman calmed right down or that all the people we saw that afternoon were healed, amused, or even knew we were there. Well, no one began to walk suddenly or speak in full sentences and many of the residents seemed unaware of us. But we sang a ton of songs in the cottage that afternoon and there were some folks joining in and smiling that we were there. The staff seemed glad and that helped us grow bolder as we went apartment to apartment. Some of us grew as bold as Susan and reached out a hand to hold a hand or touch a shoulder.

I don't mean to sentimentalize our caroling visit. We sang some carols! The apartments were warm and bright! We were glad to go and we stuck with it through the entire building! Clearly the

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February Calendar

February 3, 10, 17, 24

(Tentative dates)

11:00 AM Bible Study at
Coffee Loft in Marlboro

February 1

8:00 AM Men's Breakfast

Sunday, February 2

(Cans for Communion)

9:00 AM Singers rehearse

10:00 AM Worship

Sunday School

Sunday, February 9

(Cans for Communion)

9:00 AM Singers rehearse

10:00 AM Worship

11:30 AM Green Team

12:15 AM Lunch at 99

February 10

7:30 PM Women's Lectio

February 12

11:30 AM Grace Women

Annual Soup Luncheon

Sunday, February 16

9:00 AM Singers rehearse

10:00 AM Worship

Teen Sunday School

11:30 AM Faith in Action

February 19

2:00 pm Service at Carlyle

House (with Brad
and Briar!)

7:30 PM Stewards Ministry

February 22

2:00 PM Transition Framing-

ham and Grace
offering Movie

Sunday, February 23

9:00 AM Singers rehearse

10:00 AM Worship

Sunday School

February 24

10:00 AM Book Club

7:30 PM Leadership Team

Grace Church Congregational Meeting held on January 26th

Moderated by Linda Dunbrack

- Tim Taylor, on behalf of Stewards, presented an overview of the church's finances and the proposed 2014 budget. Tim noted that in the past 7 to 8 years, we have always had a lower deficit than anticipated. The 2014 budget was unanimously approved.
- The Leadership Team provided an update on Mission Pathways: On April 12th, there will be a full church retreat to ascertain our mission redefinition. All are invited. There will also be a "webinar" to prepare for this retreat.

There were two motions:

#1. That the congregation approve the following addition to the letter of call to Brad Watters:

"It is understood that the congregation has the right to change the status of the pastor from full-time to part-time by congregational vote, that a change to part-time status would involve a reduction in hours and compensation, and that such change would not take effect until at least sixty (60) days after any such vote, or upon other terms of mutual agreement. The reduction in compensation will be commensurate with the new status"

The Rationale: The purpose of the first motion is to provide a clear process for converting the pastor position to a part-time position that offers a reasonable transition for both the pastor and congregation.

#2: That Grace Congregational United Church of Christ extend its agreement with Brad Watters indefinitely.

The Rationale: Brad Watters has been the full-time pastor at Grace Church since July 1, 2006. He originally was contracted for a 3-year period as a redevelopment pastor and has been extended several times since that initial contract, and currently is extended through June of 2014. Extending the agreement indefinitely will allow continuity and stability through the process of redefining the congregation's mission. The additional clause of motion 1 allows for a transition to part-time status if that is what is determined by the congregation to be in line with our next steps in ministry.

Both motions were approved unanimously.

Grace Missions Spending in 2013

For a few years, we have assigned a percentage of our pledged income to missions. In 2013, that percentage was 12%, or about \$5,000. Here are some highlights:

Susan E. Frans	1,635.00
Stearns Farm	785.00
Faith in Action	500.00
Worcester Fellowship	600.00
One Fund donation	266.00
Metrowest Habitat House in Wayland	500.00
Worcester Fellowship Gift	300.00
Gift Cards for Hope Pantry @ Thanksgiving	300.00
ReStore Truck (Habitat Worcester)	395.29
Reforestation	200.00

We also collected additional donations through special offerings:

One Fund Boston collection	216.00
Typhoon Haitian Relief	205.00
One Great Hour of Sharing	128.00
Neighbors in Need	265.00

Webinar *From page one*

Anyone who has a genuine interest in the future of the congregation and a heart for the community is invited to attend. Anyone who is involved in leading or planning ministries is strongly encouraged to attend, because it is anticipated that it can help us connect our ministries to the community more effectively.

Everyone will receive an overview and interpretation of relevant demographic information about Framingham and learn how to go out and do research in our community. "Scouts" will be prepared to talk to people, make observations and gather research about the needs facing people in our community. We will need people with the ability to connect meaningfully with others and have good observation and/or listening skills to be scouts.

The webinar will be in early March from 7-8:30 pm. You may attend with a group at the church or login from home. Let Linda Dunbrack @ moderator@gracechurchucc.org know if you are interested in participating.

Linda Dunbrack

April Homelessness Walk

5TH ANNUAL WALK AWAY HOMELESSNESS

Saturday, April 12, 2014

Natick Common

(Intersection of Rt. 27 and Rt. 135)

Registration at 8:00 AM • Walk Begins 8:30
Wrap up & Prize Drawing 10:30 AM

Come join the fun and help raise funds for Family Promise Metrowest's Family Shelter and Transitional Housing Program.

Stacey Peasley Concert, children's crafts, face painting and much more!

For more information visit our website
at www.familypromisemetrowest.org

If interested in forming a Grace Team,
speak to Ronda Yeomans

Pastor's column

Continued from page two

residents are being cared for competently and kindly. Chaplain Liz said that, "There's nothing but love in this building." We should go again!

I just wanted us all to remember that Jesus laid hands on people to heal them and just to make his presence tangible. I also invite us to find gifts in each other and honor those gifts. There are some of us who not likely to use a keyboard to update a spreadsheet. There are some of us who may be unlikely to sing a solo. But each of us has moments when our gift of song, of conversation, of building repair, of crafting, of foam collecting, of garlic planting, or of approaching an intimidating/frightened stranger and reaching out to reassure and say, "Hello, dear, hello," makes our strength and gift clear. So look for the gift in yourself, look for the gift in the people around you, and give thanks and praise to the one who gave us the gift and is giving still.

*Peace and Blessing,
Pastor Brad*



Kermit's Korner

Good News!

I heard through the frog-line that in its process to become more "green," our Town of Framingham has been awarded a grant of \$301,500.

They'll be establishing a municipal energy use program to reduce energy use by 20% within 5 years; purchase only fuel-efficient vehicles for municipal use; change school building lighting to energy saving lights; and looking into the heating usages at the Memorial Building.

This news makes my complexion green with pride to be a Framingham pond resident.

Kermit

Christian Education

Upcoming Teaching Schedule

Sun. Feb. 2 -- Mary teaches

Sun. Feb. 9 -- communion/multi-age

Sun. Feb. 16 -- Ruth's teen SS

Sun. Feb. 23 -- Mary teaches

Sun. March 2 -- Ronda teaches

Sun March 9 -- communion/multi-age trip to Worcester Fellowship

Sun. March 16 -- Ruth's teen SS

Sun. March 23 -- Mary teaches

Sun. March 30 -- multi-age

Ronda Yeomans, Christian Education

Grace Church Leadership Team

Linda Dunbrack (Moderator)

Frank Carney

Ruth Carney

Mary Memmott

Terri Taylor

Karolyne White

Brad Watters

Worcester Fellowship Trip-- Sunday, March 9th

Join us in outdoor worship with the Worcester Fellowship church in front of Worcester City Hall, after our service on March 9th. Bring a sandwich or snack and carpool from Grace. Help serve sandwiches and pass out socks in Worcester at 1 p.m., followed by worship, and expect to be back at Grace by about 3 p.m. Worcester Fellowship is a church among men and women without homes “dedicated to ending isolation through pastoral care and the nurturing of community.”



Collection for Worcester Fellowship

In addition to new, white, men’s athletic socks, we are also collecting new or gently used warm gloves, scarves, and dark-colored winter hats. Men’s sizes mainly, please. We are collecting through Sunday, March 9th.

Cans for Communion -- Feb. 2 and 9th

All non-perishable food welcome, but especially seeking soups, stews, canned tuna, cooking oil, canned vegetables.



Mary Memmott, Missions

- Our January meeting turned out to be a joint one with the Green Team inasmuch as they were snowed out. Mary Memmott filled us in on the upcoming series of movies which Transition-Framingham is planning; the next on Saturday afternoon, February 22, at 2 p.m. at Grace (See page 6) Faith in Action will assist with set up and publicity. See more about this event elsewhere in this issue and plan to attend!

- We are excited to announce that Daleen Perkins will be directing a spring performance of the Not Ready for Anytime Players. YAY Daleen!! No details yet, but stay tuned!

- We will again reserve space for a table at the Framingham Earth Day Festival on April 26. As in the past few years, this will happen on the same day as our Foam Collection Day, which means, of course, that we will need more volunteers in order to cover both events. It’s not too early to sign up for your choice of place and time to help out!

- Everyone is invited to join together for lunch at the 99 Restaurant on Route 9 on February 9 at 12:15. This will follow the Green Team meeting following worship. Either come to the meeting and we can carpool, or meet us there!

- Faith in Action’s next meeting will be on February 16 after church service.

Jean Burr

Transition Framingham.org
Building Community and Local Resilience

SPRING MOVIE SERIES

LAST CALL AT THE OASIS
TURN IT AROUND

NEXT MOVIE
Saturday, February 22 at 2 PM
Grace Church Hosting

Childcare available upon request

**ENJOY COMPLIMENTARY
POPCORN
FROM STEARNS FARM**

Grace Women United

GWU will have its annual Soup Luncheon on February 12 at noon.

Come and bring a guest. If you are bringing a guest please let Lynn Burdett know by February 10th so we will know how many to plan for. (Lynn: 508-872-7863).

Book Club



Book Club will meet on Wednesday, February 26th in the library. Book TBD.

Lynn Burdett

Deacons

“Take the first step in faith. You don’t have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.” –Martin Luther King, Jr.

“The best thing about the future is that it comes one day at a time.” –Abraham Lincoln

“Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend.”
–Martin Luther King, Jr.

People of Grace,
Our winter has been all over the weather map, snow, ice, rain, bone-chilling temperatures, and hints of warmth. It has been so up and down, it’s hard to plan anything.

February is Black History Month and I would like to share some thoughts from Martin Luther King, Jr.:

On excellence: *“If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven played music or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.”*

On repentance: *“We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people.”*

On character: *“I look to a day when people will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.”*

On courage: *“We must build*

dikes of courage to hold back the flood of fear.”

On hope: *“We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.”*

February will be a pretty straight forward month at the church. The first two Sundays we will have “cans for communion.” Lent begins in March (on Ash Wednesday, March 5th) - so stay tuned to next month’s *Grace Notes* for details.

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!

During these winter months, our prayers are that you stay safe and well and please don’t take any unnecessary chances.

*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 (Deacons:
Ruth Carney, Karolyne White
deacon@gracechurchucc.org*

Storm Closings

This is the season to think about church closings due to bad weather. If we need to cancel a service or activity, tune to WCVB-TV channel 5 for our listing. We will also use 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 at home.

To Consider

(Editor’s Note: From inspirational messages for every day living.)

Try A New Approach

“Courage is the power to let go of the familiar.”
Raymond Lindquist

You will need: Intuition, Open Mindedness

How easy it is for our lives to fall into a pattern - day after day, we eat the same foods, wear the same clothes and follow the same routines. The problem is that complacency is exactly what keeps us from growing. It’s never too late to reopen your window to the world. A small peek in a new direction will offer you a fresh outlook on life.

Simple Steps:

- Let your curiosity take you on a journey. It’s as easy as following a different route to the grocery store. You may discover places you never expected, like a darling cafe or a perfect picnic spot.
- Look at life from another perspective. One idea is to visit a new place: Observing how the surroundings or people are different from where you live will give you new insight.