

# GRACE NOTES

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

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## Annual Meeting

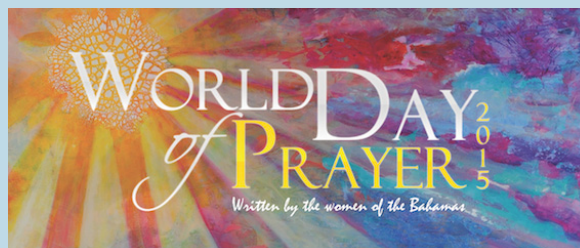
### Grace Congregational Meeting held on January 25th

Moderated by Linda Dunbrack

Despite the previous day's snowstorm, the church was able to hold its annual financial meeting on January 25th. The meeting opened with a prayer and the acceptance of the June 2014 minutes. Brad Watters presented an overview of the church's finances. There were two notable changes from the previous year.

- First, we changed how we give to the Massachusetts Conference of the UCC. Instead of contributing denominational dues and additional Basic Support, we switched to a percent of income, 4% for 2015, to what will now be called "United Church Missions." This change was an option offered this year. Leadership Ministry Team supported the change because it aligns with the congregations evolving views on "membership."

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### World Day of Prayer is March 6

The Greater Framingham Community Church is hosting the 2015 World Day of Prayer service on Friday, March 6 (at noon) at 44 Franklin St., Framingham.

The service has been written by the women of the Bahamas

***"Jesus Said to Them:***

***Do You Know What I Have Done to You?"***

If interested in helping or for information, contact Judy Sebastian.

## From the Pastor

Dear Ones,

In the human struggle to understand the nature of truth, winter has landed in New England. There is no falsehood in the depth of snow I see outside my window, or yours I suspect. From one perspective, the snow just is. “The Teacher,” the voice we hear in the book of Ecclesiastes, might regard the snow and the cold with wisdom’s gimlet eye. The snow is neither good nor bad, it is just what is there.

How about you?

A ramble through the internet encounters reasons why people say winter is not just winter - winter is a drag. Here’s a list:

*Winter is cold, dark, one is trapped indoors, there is snow shoveling, hazardous driving, slush of uncertain depth, winter seems to last forever, walkways are slippery, nature looks dead, New England heating costs, chapped, heavy clothes, and banging heat pipes.*

Then there is a list of why winter is excellent. Consider:

*Winter air is crisp, sunrises are viewable at a civilized hour, skiing, sledding, tubing, etc., hot chocolate, quilts, snow days, no mosquitoes, poison ivy, ticks, or grass mowing, winter has much of Advent and Lent and all of Christmas, cozy clothing, snow on trees, snow on houses, snow on mountains, snow sculptures, snow falling.*

How does it change our experience of this day and tomorrow to see winter as the second list rather than the first? Both lists contain truth so this question is not about what is true or “truer.” My question for you, beloved, is about how you let various truths live in your speaking, your emotional response through a winter’s day, and your prayers at morning and evening.

Perhaps, pastor is here advocating the theology of Pollyanna, Eleanor H. Parker’s optimistic heroine in her bestselling 1913 book of the same name? Maybe. Or perhaps I am suggesting that you observe, as Masha says in

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## From the Moderator

### Message From Linda Dunbrack

As Moderator, I would like to take a moment to express my appreciation for those who have key leadership roles within our church.

Thanks to the members of the Leadership Ministry Team: Nancy Brown, Frank Carney, Ruth Carney, and Terri Taylor. Facilitating an inclusive congregational decision-making process is not easy and involves creative thinking and behind-the-scenes planning. Terri brings a creative strategic approach and willingness to think out-of-the-box. Nancy has enthusiasm for new ideas even though “old folks don’t like change.” Ruth keeps an eye on the logistics and makes sure that the job of the Deacons is executed faithfully. Frank has a combination of idealism that stretches our thinking and pragmatism that brings us back down to earth. We make an awesome team, and it is one I feel privileged to be a part of.

Thanks to Frank for his leadership of the Stewardship Team and the Green Team, to Tim Taylor for his contributions to the Stewards, and to Nancy and Walter Brown for faithfully serving as our financial officers for so many years. Thanks to Jean Burr for her leadership of the Faith in Action Team and the Styrofoam events. Thanks to Mary Memmott for coordinating a plethora of local mission activities. Thanks to Lynn Burdett for her leadership in the book club and Grace Woman United. Thanks to those who have represented the congregation at the UCC annual meeting and at other denominational events: Brad, Frank, Ruth, and Terri.

Thanks to Brad Watters. Thanks for all of the little things you do, seen and unseen, in support of the Leadership Ministry Team, Stewardship Ministry Team, Faith in Action, and members in need. Thanks for making us laugh during worship, and for sharing your passion with us. Thanks for a willingness to embrace our humanity as well as show us your own, and for loving us both as individuals and as a community. Thanks for sharing your creative ideas and holding onto them lightly so that there is plenty of room for the ideas of others.

# Thank You, Grace Church

Although Grace Church is a small congregation, our accomplishments are remarkable. All too often, we forget what a difference we make. This page is devoted to recent “Thank-you” messages sent to Grace Church.

## Foam Collection

ReFoamIt is very thankful for Grace Church. Without everyone’s support ReFoamIt would not have been born. On Make a Difference Day in Oct. 2009, the church undertook a huge project by hosting ReFoamIt’s very first foam collection event and have continued to support us by hosting an event every 3 months. This has been a huge undertaking getting - enough volunteers to greet the 100 plus people at each event especially when it is pouring rain, bitterly cold, or sweltering heat. Little did we know how successful this would be on that first collection day.

Over the past 2 years, ReFoamIt has processed about 150 tons of foam and approximately 4.5 tons of it has been due to Grace Church’s efforts. Thank you very much for all you have done to help us and the environment!

*Barbara and Dave Sherman*

## Appalachia Project

Dear Friends: Yes, we consider you friends after having attended special programs at your church and ... receiving generous donations for our Appalachia project. We received a sizable check a few days ago and you must know how happy we were with it. We couldn’t resist buying four blankets for some of “our” poorest children in Kentucky. We will be keeping the remaining money for shipping expenses. Providing the schools with books is our greatest goal and has been for the past 10 years. Thank you so much for helping us with our undertakings. Sincerely *Fritz and Anke Guertsen*

## Family Services Coalition

Thank you for your generous \$160 donation to support Family Services Coalition. Your donation is deeply appreciated

Your thoughtful gift supports our work to address the service gaps and needs of families placed in Framingham and Natick motels who are currently homeless. We provide emergency food before state aid is secured; essential products such as diapers, cleaning supplies and toiletries; bus passes for medical appointments and local service agencies, fees for school vacation camp; and emergency financial assistance. We could not do this vital work without the partnership of friends like you.

## Worcester Fellowship

We are so very grateful for your continued support of Worcester Fellowship and being part of our efforts dedicated to ending isolation by providing spiritual care and by nurturing community. Our ministry for the homeless and at-risk of Worcester continues because of you!

Worcester Fellowship is about listening, being there and building up individuals so that we can be in community together. We are lunch, church and bible study on Sundays. We are book group on Mondays and we are there when someone needs a pastoral visit.

With your help, together, we are able to continue our ministry and respond to your community’s needs. Again, we say thanks for your kind donations and ask that you keep us in your prayers as you are kept in ours.

## Hope Pantry

Church volunteers who deliver canned good to the food pantry echo the same heartwarming response: “They are so appreciative of not only the canned goods, but the fresh vegetables from Stearns.”

## Natick Food Pantry

Additionally, the Natick food pantry, “Place to Turn” greatly appreciates the occasional “overflow” veggies we’ve brought their way.

## Pathways Shelter

The response to Grace’s Christmas toys for

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## Our Environment in 2015.... Kermit Reminds Us: “It’s Not Easy Being Green...”



*Editor’s Note: As we move into 2015, Kermit and WebEcoist offer these reminders of our world’s most pressing environmental concerns*

### 1. Climate Change

From the melting polar ice caps to catastrophic weather and threatened ecosystems, not only is climate change real, scientists agree that humans are influencing climate change with our production of greenhouse gases (mainly stemming from carbon dioxide and methane). There are meaningful lifestyle changes that we can make to help.

### 2. Energy

Clean energy vs. dirty energy. Renewable energy. Energy independence. Petroleum. Biofuels. Coal. ANWR and offshore drilling. Energy is second only to climate change in significance. Though no single energy source is going to be the solution, positive developments toward a cleaner future are happening every day.

### 3. Waste

With the looming problems of climate change and energy, focus has shifted away from landfill waste. The world has gotten accustomed to a throwaway lifestyle, but that’s neither healthy nor sustainable. Water bottles are the defining symbol of this critical issue. People are becoming aware of the consequences of “fast consumption” and there are changes you can make in your own life to help reduce landfill waste.

### 4. Water

Our global reserves of drinkable water are a fraction of 1% and 1 in 5 humans does not have access to potable (safe) water. There are many potential solutions, some promising, others challenging. There are things you can do. (Hint: Start with turning off the faucet when you brush.)

### 5. Food

Biofuels have turned into a global controversy - the idea that people may be causing the star-

vation of millions in order to fuel their SUVs is sickening. Eating hamburgers has as much or more impact on the global food picture as the use of biofuels. We know that the planet can’t afford the Western way of eating. It would take 5 earths to support that lifestyle!

### 6. Consumption

The way we live now is borrowing against the future. Reducing consumption, and smart consumption, are both necessary - and there are ways to go about doing this. Some methods are pure geek, some are high tech, and some are just common sense.

### 7. Land Management

From desertification to polar ice melting to erosion and deforestation, existing land management choices are not serving the planet or its inhabitants very well. There is very little land left that is undeveloped, either with structures or roads. And there is virtually no land left that is not subject to light or noise pollution. People need to return to the conservation spirit Americans were once famous for.

### 8. Ecosystems and Endangered Species

The good news is that some species have made a comeback. The bad news is that many more species are now under threat, including indicator species and evolutionarily unique species. (When an indicator species becomes threatened, endangered, or worse, extinct, this means an entire ecosystem faces collapse.)

### 9. Public Health Issues

Our tomatoes have fish DNA. Killer bugs are on the loose?. Superweeds are taking over corn fields. Autism is on the rise. From genetic manipulation and cloning to public health issues and food and drug contamination, get to know the important and most interesting green issues related to genetic science, agribusiness, public health and more.

Many people don’t consider that what they do

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## Kermit's Korner

*Continued from page four*

will affect future generations. If humans continue moving forward in such a harmful way towards the future, there will be no future to consider. Although it's true that we cannot physically stop our ozone layer from spreading, there are still many things we can do to put a dent in what we already know. By raising awareness in your local community and within your families about these issues, you can help contribute to a more environmentally conscious and friendly place for you (and future generations) to live.

*Thanks! Kermit*

*(With research assistance  
by Linda Hilliard)*



**Special Kermit Note:** We welcome contributions to this monthly column in *Grace Notes*. Share your environmental concerns and passions with others...

## 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.

## Grace Women United

GWU will meet at the church on Thursday, February 12th at 11:30 AM.

*Lynn Burdett*

## Book Club



Book Club will meet on Wednesday, February 25th at 10AM.

*Lynn Burdett*

## Faith in Action

Faith in Action will meet after church on Sunday, February 22nd.

## Sunday, February 1 No Cans for Communion Instead - Warm-up for Worcester!

You are invited to bring warm hats (dark colors, tight knits), gloves (especially waterproof ones), and scarves to "top off" our sock donations. Men's sizes mainly, and new or very gently used only. We'll be delivering the collection that day, so remember to bring your donation to worship.

Cans for Communion will return in March.

## February Calendar

### Sunday, February 1

*No Cans for Communion  
Warm Up for Worcester!*  
(see article below left)

9:00 AM Singers rehearse  
10:00 AM Worship  
Communion

### Wednesday, February 4

8:00 AM

### Saturday, February 7

10:00 AM Book Club  
(postponed January date)

### Sunday, February 8

9:00 AM Singers rehearse  
10:00 AM Worship  
Communion

### Thursday, February 12

11:30 PM Grace Women  
United

### Sunday, February 15

9:00 AM Singers rehearse  
10:00 AM Worship

### Sunday, February 22

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

### Wednesday, February 25

10:00 AM Book Club

### Friday, March 6

World Day of Prayer  
(see article on page one)

## From the Pastor *Continued from page two*

Anton Chekov's 1901 play, "The Three Sisters," that, "Happy people don't notice whether it is winter or summer." Well, no, I would rather you notice winter (and summer when it is summer.) No, I am not trying to judge you or give you cause to judge yourself for the way you approach winter. I have something else in mind.

I am advocating your morning and evening prayers; that you stick to them, never missing a day. And here is a way you can try to pray your way through winter.

- First, accept the challenge of praying daily, when you wake up and when you are about to close your eyes to sleep at night.
- Second, make it your intention to summon or acknowledge or provisionally accept that you are praying in the realm of the holy. You can even say to yourself, "Okay, now I'm orienting myself to the holy, toward God, in the direction of what means most to me." This is one of the reasons people get down on their knees, put their hands together, and bow their heads. It is a purposeful act to enter the outside and inside posture of prayer - even if for you it feels silly or "just an act." Do it anyway.
- Third, review what you have seen of life since you last prayed. Look outward to the people you have encountered, the events, and the weather too! You are looking at the truth of life.
- Fourth, look inward at how you feel about those things and if you are anxious or grieving or puzzled or angry or whatever, let yourself name those feelings and see the truth that way. Tighten. Lament.
- Fifth, look again and find your feelings of joy or humor or pleasure or accomplishment and let yourself see the truth that way. Open. Honor.

Finally, say, "Amen," and move on to your day or your sleep. Let me know how it goes if you like.

*Peace and Blessing,  
Pastor Brad*

## Annual Meeting *Continued from page one*

- Second, the Deacons Fund, which is a discretionary fund used by the pastor to help people in need in the community, was shifted from a revolving account to a line item in the operating budget.

The 2015 budget was unanimously approved.

The Leadership Team provided an update on the Future Story process. (Details below.)

## Thank you *Continued from page three*

Pathway children is one of our most treasured responses. The thanks and appreciation truly captures the spirit of giving during the holidays.

### And Let's Not Forget!

Grace's participation in Walk for Hunger, Walk to Prevent Homelessness, Gay Pride Parade as well as GWU's Church World Service Hygiene Kits, Donations to Susan E. Frans and Ongoing Faith in Action programs  
As well as special offerings: One Great Hour of Sharing and Neighbors in Need

## Future Story: What Next?

In the fall, we spent some time determining how Grace will move forward with its new mission: enabling authentic, positive connections among people of diverse cultural and economic backgrounds by fostering relationships and connections between gardens, gardeners, people who want to garden, and people who need access to healthy food.

Now it is time to bring those ideas and plans to life. In the coming weeks, the Leadership Ministry will be coordinating meetings to work on a variety of related projects. These meetings will be announced on Sundays, and those of you who indicated an interest or skill related to a particular aspect of a project will be contacted individually. We hope you will prayerfully consider what part you can play in building our future.