



# GRACE NOTES

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

## Holiday Fair/Living Nativity a hit!

Grace Church’s annual Holiday Fair on December 6 - and the church’s first Living Nativity on December 7 – were both deemed highly successful from a number of perspectives.

This was our first two-level Fair - utilizing just about every room in the Salem End Road building. Throughout the event, there was a terrific sense of camaraderie - along with a good dose of holiday spirit. The annual chowder luncheon was delicious (as always), the crafts were wonderful (with special thanks to Joyce and Jim Dunn who sent their handmade crafts from Arizona). The bake table was overflowing (with additional thanks to BJs) and the gift baskets were original, clever and numerous. Reverend Liz Magill from the Worcester Fellowship staffed the Mission table for a while - and the children had their own shopping emporium and ornament making center. All the hard work paid off with an impressive \$1,600 income.



The next day, Sunday, was the Living Nativity in the church yard. Mary and Joseph were there, along with the shepherds (and three sheep with attitude) and wise men. Kudos to Daleen Perkins who did a stellar job of organizing the Nativity - and to all the children, adults (weren’t those two angels on the deck the best?!), cocoa ladies and behind-the-scenes workers. Although it was cold, there was much warmth and good cheer to this event.

Both activities were well attended by church members and visitors (the Fair was shoulder-to-shoulder shoppers several times during the day). It was a good weekend for Grace – one that happily launched the holiday season for many of us.

## Epiphany Service will be at Plymouth on January 4

*Three magi set out from different lands on a journey to see a savior. The magi believed that this person would save the world. What would that mean? What kind of person would we need to save the world? As they traveled, the magi saw different problems with creation. So they formed different ideas from one another of just what a savior would be and do. We listen in on their thinking as they travel and we see the images of what they see. Will they find the savior for whom they seek?*

We will once again join with our brothers and sisters at Edwards and Plymouth churches for our joint Epiphany Service on January 4 at Plymouth Church in Framingham Centre at 10:00 AM.

### Warm Feet for Worcester Three-Church Sock Drive

If the wise men had been traveling in New England, no doubt they would have traded in their sandals for warm socks and boots. At this year’s Epiphany Service we 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. Help us keep some

### Grace Notes

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Happy New Year!

## Note From the Pastor

Dear Ones,

We've got lots of snow in Framingham; a snowy Christmas. Joe Belloli has faithfully plowed the parking lot. Tim Taylor has placed new, welcoming mats for our snowy feet. Ruth Carney has ordered poinsettias. Mary Memmott has gathered the gifts for some Framingham kids who need a little Christmas. Beverly Ablondi & Company have been tending our extended Christmas Fair gifts. Shirley Atwell's crèche is placed where we can all see the nativity figures. Terri Taylor and Linda Dunbrack and Ellie Crawford have been planning worship services that all our families find informative, entertaining, and spirit-filled.

Shall I continue?

Grace Church is alive with a strong, Christmas pulse. There is no mistake this year that we have caught the Christmas spirit. The poet calls it the story that "has not grown old." Our Christmas story continues to provide us with perspectives that illuminate, moments that move us, and humor that surprises.

The participation of all of you in what we do at Grace is key to our future as a community. We who claim to be part of Grace, and we who are claimed by Grace Church as our own, we are the ones who will make happen what happens. We are the ones who are looking for others who want to join this journey of faith named Grace Congregational United Church of Christ.

Oh, and there is another participant, isn't there? God is part of our work just as God is part of Christmas. Our way forward is not clear at the moment. What lies ahead for us has to come from our discernment of what God has in mind. The work of discernment includes personal prayer practices, small group conversation, community learning, and a growing habit of listening for God's direction and affirmation, a habit we can develop. For those of us without training in discernment and those of us who don't have the habit of listening with our hearts, we have some learning to do.

*O Lord,*

*Herods still sit on Herod's throne.  
The innocents still are massacred.  
The inns are full of those who pay their way,  
And the rest make out as best they may.*

*It is still hard to tell when babies  
will be born.  
Some are searching like the magi.  
Some are working like the shepherds--  
Doing the jobs that must be done,  
Even on holidays.*

*By this story that has not worn out  
Bring us to wonder:  
That you who mark the sparrow's fall  
Should become this sparrow small  
To share, to suffer, and save us all.*

*Amen.*

*- S. Mark Heim*

Are you along for the journey?

I'd be interested in your thoughts and experiences with discernment. I hope to share my own with you as the weeks of 2009 go by. 2009! It is upon us!

Included in this *Grace Notes* is a poem, used with permission of the author, Rev. Dr. Mark Heim. Mark is the Samuel Abbot Professor of Christian Theology at Andover Newton Theological School. It is a Christmas present for you and I hope you share it as an Epiphany devotion. I hope it deepens the 12 days of Christmas so that your New Year is hopeful, focused on justice, and open to the saving grace of God.

Peace and Blessing,  
Pastor Brad

## Congregational Meeting January 25

A congregational meeting will be held on  
Sunday, January 25, immediately after  
church. The agenda includes:  
**Financial Reports**  
**Budget for 2009**

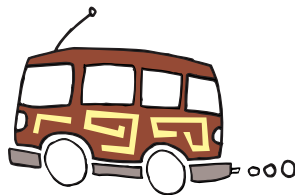
**Child care will be provided.**  
**A light lunch will be served.**

## Start off the New Year with a New Plan and Women's Lectio!

Have you made a New year's pledge to do something more with the spiritual side of your life? Would you like to explore how to better connect the "spiritual" with the "real world" everyday activities? Come explore the ancient art of Lectio Divina as we gather the second Monday of each month (The 12th this month) starting at 7:30. All are welcome.

## Give a church goer a lift!

There are several church members who would like to come to church on Sunday mornings, but are unable to drive. Sometimes they can get too church - but not back - and vice versa.

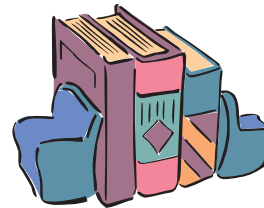


If you can help out with transportation (even one Sunday a month), speak to Pastor Brad or send an e-mail to Kab in the office - [office@gracechurchucc.org](mailto:office@gracechurchucc.org)

No one should miss church because they can't get a ride.

## In Case of Cancellation

Winter has arrived! Grace Church is 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.



## Book Club

The Book Club will meet on Wednesday, January 28 at 10AM. They are reading Richard Russo's BRIDGE OF SIGHS.

## Church calendar - January

January 1	Happy New Year	January 14	11:30 AM	Grace Women United
January 3	8:00 AM Men's Group	January 18	10:00 AM	Worship
January 4	Epiphany at Plymouth Church Socks for Worcester 10:00 AM Worship	January 19	1:00 PM 7:00 PM	Worship Planning Deacons
January 5	1:00 PM Worship Planning	January 21	7:30 PM	Stewards
January 6	7:30 PM Central Council	January 25	10:00 AM 11:30	Worship Lunch and Congregational meeting
January 11	10:00 AM Worship Socks and sandwiches for the Worcester Fellowship Blue Jean Sunday - degreening of the church	January 26	1:00 PM	Worship Planning
January 12	1:00 PM 7:30 PM	January 28	10:00 AM 5:30 PM	Book Club Eat at Eagles
	Worship Planning Women's Lectio			

## Ministry Teams

**Missions MT**  
Eleanor Crawford,  
Chair  
Mary Memmott  
*mission@*  
*gracechurchucc.*  
*org*



## Mission

### Invitation to Read . . . Earth-Care Education Series Continues

Need an excuse to stay in with a good book on a cold winter day? The Earth-Care Education series with Edwards and Grace Church continues with a book focus. We have chosen the book *Hot, Flat, and Crowded: Why We Need a Green Revolution and How It Can Transform America*, by Thomas Friedman.

Free copies of the book will be available at both churches throughout January. We encourage you to take a copy home and then share with a friend. We will meet for an informal discussion of the book on Tuesday, February 10, 7 p.m., location to be announced, with child-care available. Join us in reading a book that the *Boston Globe* called “a compelling manifesto that deserves a wide reading, especially by members of Congress and candidates for President.” If the President needs to read this book, why not us? We hope it will inspire a rich and interesting discussion on important environmental issues.

### Socks + Sandwiches + Snacks? – January 11

If you miss the chance to attend the Epiphany Service on Jan. 4, and would still like to donate new socks to Worcester Fellowship, please bring them to church on Jan. 11. Our donation basket will be making its way to Worcester that afternoon.

We are also providing lunch (a winter picnic!) for the Worcester Fellowship service that day. With no “Cans for Communion” this month, this is your chance to help feed the hungry. We will need 5-10 peanut butter sandwiches, 20-25 meat with cheese and/or lettuces and mustard (no mayo, please), all individually wrapped. Hard-boiled eggs have also been requested, and soft fruit like oranges or bananas are welcome. Contact Mary Memmott if you can help provide any of these lunch items for January 11. The Missions team can reimburse for food costs if needed.

## Christian Education

### Christian Ed. MT

Daleen Perkins  
Ronda Yeomans  
*christianed@*  
*gracechurchucc.org*

The Christian Education Ministry Team extends warm and sincere thanks to Linda Dunbrack, Terri Taylor, Brad Watters and all those who participated in creating the lovely series of Advent plays this past season. Thank you to Brad Watters and the entire Taylor Family for the gorgeous “set” /backdrop for the plays. It is a wonderous work of art which we hope graces our sanctuary for a long time to come.

Hearty thanks also to Susan Minor and Terri Taylor for organizing all the children’s choral and instrumental musical offerings.

Much thanks also to Daleen Perkins, Susan Minor, Walter Brown, Brian Winsor and whoever else made sure the Living Nativity happened this year. For a small church in a new setting we have had a very rich and varied educational experience this Advent.

Our “multiple intelligences” approach to education is evident to all. How wonderful that our congregation takes so seriously it’s commitment to the village raising the children and not just leaving it to a few. The Christian Ed teachers and helpers, while still busy, have greatly enjoyed this change from our regular lessons and have found it to be “as good as a rest” as the saying goes. We wish you all a merry Christmas and a very happy New Year!

## Ministry Teams

**Deacon MT**  
**Ruth Carney, Chair**  
**George Tynes**  
**Karolyne White**

*deacons@  
gracechurchucc.  
org*

**No matter what  
the task, people  
of Grace stepped  
forward with much  
of the work behind  
the scenes.**

## Deacons

People of Grace,

We hope your Christmas brought you many happy memories! We want to wish you a Joyous, Healthy and Happy New Year!

### **Advent and Christmas at Grace:**

- We have had an unusual and intriguing **Advent series** this year. We have journeyed through Advent with angels, shepherds, sheep, a cow, doves, inn keepers, Elizabeth, Zechariah, Rebecca, Mary, Joseph and (of course) Donkey. Thank you to the planning team who put this all together. It has been fabulous!
- We had a wonderful **Live Nativity** on December 7th and members of our church family went **caroling** on December 14th.
- At 6:00 PM on December 21, 2008, we had scheduled a **Longest Night Service**. Unfortunately, this service had to be cancelled due to a snow storm. We will offer it again next year.
- Our December 24th **Christmas Eve worship** service at 6:00 PM was family oriented and concluded our Advent journey. The second service at 8:00 PM was our traditional service of Candles, Lessons, Carols and Communion.

### **Beyond Christmas at Grace:**

- We will once again join with our brothers and sisters at Edwards and Plymouth churches for our joint **Epiphany Service** on January 4, 2009 at Plymouth Church in Framingham Centre at 10:00 AM.
- We will have another **Blue Jean Sunday/De-greening of the Church** on January 11, 2009. Please wear comfortable clothes to church, bring a bag lunch and stay to un-decorated the church and put all those Advent and Christmas items away. There will be something for everyone to do, no

matter what your age or physical abilities. Beverages and dessert will be provided.

- We have so many **people to thank** this year for their willingness to participate in the life of Grace. No matter what the task, people of Grace stepped forward with much of the work behind the scenes. We extend our heartfelt thanks to you.
- Please don't forget if we **need to cancel worship** or any other event for weather related reasons, we are listed on The Boston Channel, so tune to WCRB Channel 5 for the listing.
- If you would like to **provide flowers for the altar**, please be in touch with Ruth Carney. If you wish to have her order flowers from our florist, the current price is \$35.00.
- Every Sunday, things get done before, during and after worship. How would you like to **volunteer** 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 new bulletin board in our fellowship area. There are many, many openings!

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 Deacon Ministry Team

## Ministry Teams

### Stewards

Jean Burr, Chair  
Lynn Burdett  
Frank Carney  
Judy Sebastian  
Tim Taylor

stewards@  
gracechurchucc.org

## Stewards

- During the past month, **new mats** have been purchased for our two main entrances. This will help to minimize the amount of winter snow and slush being brought into the building.
- Because the computer which Brad has been using has ceased to work, we are looking into providing a **new laptop** for his use.
- We are pleased at the result of our **stewardship program** and thank all who have submitted their pledge for 2009. Anyone who has not yet pledged, but plans to do so, is urged to complete this as soon as possible, in order to assist us with the preparation of the proposed budget for the coming year.
- Stewards are interested in finding one or two members who would be interested in **learning the financial record- keeping ropes** for Grace. Although the current team is willing to continue, we feel that there should be a trained “back-up” person ready to step in, if necessary, for Financial Secretary, Treasurer, and Assistant Treasurer. If you feel that you have the ability and would like to learn about one of these positions, please contact any member of the Stewards team.

## Faith in Action



- Plans are going forth for a **spring series** of events of general interest and open to the public. Although we have several ideas in mind, we would welcome suggestions for topics or themes. At our next meeting, on Monday, December 29, we hope to move ahead with these plans. That meeting will be held in Jean Burr’s home, 36 Raymond Street, Framingham, when we would be happy to welcome some new folks. We meet at 7:00 pm.
- The feedback which we have received about the **Grace Church mugs** has been very positive. If anyone wishes to purchase another, they are still available at the church on Sunday mornings.

### Grace Congregational Church, UCC

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