

GRACE NOTES

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

Foam Collection is Saturday, January 5th

Can you lend a hand for our quarterly Styrofoam Recycling Day? (Yes, there will be hot coffee in the kitchen!) If you are able to help out for a couple of hours (between 10 a.m. and 3 PM), please let Jean Burr know so that she can develop a schedule.

Warm Feet for Worcester January Sock Drive Special Collection at Epiphany Service

During the month of January Grace Church 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. There will be a special collection for these items at the “Season of Sharing” Epiphany Service so put “socks” on your shopping list, if you can, and help us exceed our goal of 200 pairs!

Note: There will be no Cans for Communion in January.

Church e-mail address changed

In an effort to reduce spam into the church computer, the Grace office now has a new e-mail address:

- Old e-mail: office@gracechurchucc.org
- New e-mail: churchoffice@gracechurchucc.org

Please change your address book as soon as you can!

January Special Calendar Events

- January 6 - Our annual joint Epiphany Service with our sister churches (Plymouth and Edwards). This year it will be at Plymouth Church in Framingham Centre at 10:00 AM.
- January 13 - We will have a Congregational Conversation after worship.
- January 20- Blue Jean Sunday /De-greening of the Church. Please wear comfortable clothes to church and plan to stay to un-decorate 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.
- January 27 - This is the date for our January Congregational Meeting, which will take place after worship. The agenda will include:
 - 2013 budget overview
 - Motion to support allocating a percentage of pledges to mission and a motion to approve the 2013 Budget
 - Leadership Team Update

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Dear Ones,

When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping." To this day, especially in times of 'disaster,' I remember my mother's words and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers - so many caring people in this world. -- Fred Rogers

By the time you read this, the events of Friday, December 14, 2012 in Newtown Connecticut will be some weeks in the past. It will have been a couple of months since Hurricane Sandy paid its visit in October to people from Cuba to New Jersey. Other disasters stretch further away in time. Of course, there's no telling what has transpired in the world during the week or two since the day in December that I am writing you this note.

Are you surprised that a disaster has happened to someone else in that time? I'm not. What has struck me recently is how disaster and death and evil are ordinary. I don't mean to suggest they are less painful because so ordinary. I simply want to follow John Donne's "Death, Be Not Proud," written about 1610, in its dismissal of death's power over us. (**Printed at right.**)

Donne wrote his sonnet in the face of the power of death. I suppose that he noticed, as any of us can notice, how death provokes fear and how fear can cripple us. Now, we all take reasonable precautions and that's healthy. Then many of us go further. We go to great lengths to achieve safety and avoid any risk of death, careful not to step on the cracks, careful to keep people away from us just in case. Here is where we may hurry along our way and avoid the damaged stranger lying in a ditch, who might be dangerous. Here is where we stay inside and try not to know anyone outside of a tight circle. Here is why we don't volunteer.

Christians have long held the hope of eternal life through sharing in the death of Christ and thus sharing in the resurrection of Christ. Do you have a strong hope of life eternal at home with God? Does that strong hope give you a way to tame the fear of death? Are you then released for caring and ministry beyond your comfort or safety zone?

Death and other disasters are as ordinary as a

Death, Be Not Proud

*Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more, death, thou shalt die.*

leaf falling off a tree as the tree ages into autumn. What is the unusual thing?

The unusual thing is how some of us respond during disaster and difficulty. At these times, we have the opportunity to become more than human, or, perhaps, fully human. When we take the opportunity to help, we are God's angels, which is to say, we become the fruit of the love and care God has for creation. This is the path that I believe is surely open to each of us. Whether there is a life after this, as John Donne believed, or whether our lives simply end, we can live as angels. We can bring the message of comfort and the concrete help of showing up with what's needed. We can walk this world as though we are already half in heaven.

As the new year 2013 begins, I suggest, I invite, I urge you to walk your path this way. Walk with yourself already half in heaven. For if you see yourself for the angel that you are, you will see that death is ordinary and not scary. You will see need and know that you are the one who has been chosen to respond, right now. Will you walk this way?

*Peace and Blessing,
Pastor Brad*



Kermit's Korner

On March 23rd across the world at 8:30 PM the lights will go off. From places like London, Paris, and New York this phenomenon will occur. But why? Because this is Earth Hour. Will your home go dark?

Earth Hour is a time when everybody turns off their electricity for an hour to show their concern for the amount of electricity and other resources being used by people today. Find out more about Earth Hour at www.earthhour.org. I'll be doing Earth Hour this year. Will you?

Amelia Burton

Green Team Update



The Green Team met on December 13th. In reviewing Level 3 of the UCC Green Church guidelines (Grace has already achieved Levels 1 and 2), the team feels that we have accomplished as much as we can on this third and final level. Mary Memmott will speak to Willie Sordillo at the Conference Center about next steps (if any) to achieve Level 3. It may be that we already qualify.

The team also discussed raising congregational participation in Green Meetings. The team will meet as usual in the evening in January, but will look into after church meetings beginning in February. The next Green Team meeting will be on January 10th, beginning at 7:15 PM.

Green Team Recommendation

There's a new movie coming out this weekend entitled ***Promised Land***. Academy Award nominee Matt Damon co-wrote and stars in ***Promised Land***, a story about the ongoing controversy surrounding renewable energy.

In addition to weighing the pros and cons of a process to extract natural gas, known as "fracking," the movie also explores the plight of the average American and what people are willing to sacrifice to make money.

The Green Team urges everyone to see this important movie.

Faith in Action

In December, we realized that FIA had not spent most of its allocated funds for the year. As part of Grace's Mission budget, we are committed to spend it by year end. So FIA was pleased to send \$250 to help defray shipping costs of books and supplies to the school children in Appalachia. The balance of nearly the same amount was sent to the Robin Hood Foundation for the Sandy Relief Fund. All who were involved in the decision agreed that it was a good one. Below is a note from the couple in charge of the Appalachia Project.

Jean Burr

Thank You Note Received

Dear Members of Grace Church

How are you all? Hopefully well. It is close to impossible to describe our surprise when we received your plain envelope with far from plain contents. Our first thought was "How nice, a Christmas greeting from our friends at Grace Church. Maybe there will be a special program coming up again!" Instead we found your Big check for our Appalachia Project, which put tears in our eyes. How wonderful. Yes, we continue to send books and sometimes clothing to some of the poorest areas in Kentucky on a weekly basis. We alternate between eleven schools as you know (K-12th grade).

The needs are indescribable. Recently we received a note from one of the librarians. She told us that yet another one of the mines had closed. Her husband lost his job and so did many of the other men in the area.

Very few people have any idea of the poverty there. Some think that our Project is just a drop in the bucket as far as helping those people is concerned. That kind of attitude truly bothers us. Suppose everyone would think that way. We can accomplish quite a bit with your donation, the help from our Church and the gifts from our own family. If more people would follow that pattern a lot could be done for those families.

We simply cannot thank you enough for the sharing of your bounty with those who have so little.

Many, many thanks, Peace and love
Frits and Anke Geurtsen, Appalachia Project

Stewards Ministries

The Team met on December 18th. A review of the Financial Reports showed nothing unexpected. The Stewards did a first walkthrough of the 2013 Budget, which will be presented at the January 27th Congregational Meeting. Next Meeting: Wednesday, January 16th

Christian Ed

Sunday School at Grace will be starting again soon. As always, teachers and aides are needed and welcomed. It is a rewarding job to work with our young people.

Speak with Ronda Yeomans or Mary Memmott if you can lend a hand.

Grace Women United

GWU will meet on Wednesday, January 9th (depending on weather)

Book Club



Book Club will meet on Wednesday, January 23rd. We are reading *A YEAR OF PLEASURES* by Elizabeth Berg.

A Few Environmental Tips

- **Go Blank:** Computer monitors use approximately 90 watts of power when they're on (even when a screen saver is operating), but only a few watts when they're in power save, sleep or hibernate modes.
- **Face the Truth:** Rent and watch Al Gore's documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) for nonpartisan, hard-hitting details about global warming. Invite any climate change doubters to share your popcorn.
- **No need for a fabric softener:** Beyond imparting a heady (usually synthetic) fragrance to your laundry, fabric softeners do little more than reduce fabric static.

From the Book 1,001 Ways to Save the Earth

If the weather is bad



If we need to cancel a service or activity at Grace due to bad weather, there will be an announcement on WCRB channel 5. We will also use other sources (i.e.: e-mail, Facebook, etc) to get the word out. If there is a power failure and you cannot access TV or internet, but your phone or cell phone still works,

January Calendar

January 5	10:00 AM	Foam Collection Day <i>(Many helping hands needed)</i>	January 13	9:00 AM	Singers rehearse
				10:00 AM	Worship
				11:30 AM	Congregational Conversation
January 6	10:00 AM	Epiphany service at Plymouth Church Bring socks (see page one)	January 16	7:30 PM	Stewards' meeting
January 9	11:30 AM	GWU meeting	January 20	Blue Jean Sunday	
				9:00 AM	Singers rehearse
				10:00 AM	Worship
January 10	7:15 PM	Green Team meeting	January 23	10:00 AM	Book Club
January 12	8:00 AM	Men's Breakfast Group	January 27	Congregational Meeting Day	
				9:00 AM	Singers rehearse
				10:00 AM	Worship
				11:30 AM	Congo meeting

“Laughter rises out of tragedy, when you need it the most, and rewards you for your courage.”

-Erma Bombeck

People of Grace,

We hope your Christmas was all you hoped it would be (and perhaps even better than you dreamed).

Feliz año nuevo, Buono anno, Bonne anné, Selamat tahun baru, Sretna Nova godina, Glückliches neues Jahr, Onnellista uutta vuotta, Gelukkig Nieuwjaar, Kè kontan ane nouvo, Bhlianin nua sásta, Feliz ano novo - to say in many ways - Happy New Year!

And, as a new year arrives, we find resolutions are easy to make but oh so hard to keep. In fact, many people refuse to make them for that very reason. After all, by February, most people have broken them, and by March, they don't even remember what they were. It's just too hard to change, so why try?

Yet, Scripture exhorts us to be more like Christ, to forgive our enemies, to tithe and to be thankful in all situations. Shouldn't we resolve to put some of these into practice, even if ever so imperfectly? Peter admonishes us to be holy as God is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16). That's the ultimate New Year's resolution – all but certain to be broken repeatedly before the sun sets on the first day. Yet, though we fail, are we not better for trying? And, shouldn't we continue to try?

We have journeyed through Advent and Christmas and are fast approaching Epiphany.

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Epiphany, from the Greek word epiphaneia, means an appearance or manifestation. Christians celebrate this festival each year on January 6, the 12th day after Christmas. Epiphany ends on Ash Wednesday, when Lent begins.

Epiphany marks the coming of the Magi, or wise men, to worship the baby Jesus. Because the Magi were Gentiles, Epiphany symbolizes the first recognition of Christ by non-Jews. It's a reminder that Christ came as the light – and Savior – of the whole world. The traditional color for Epiphany is green, indicating life, growth, hope and eternity. Symbols for the season include a light, candle or star; a crown or three crowns; three gifts; and a globe. In the modern church, Epiphany has become a time to focus on reaching out and “showing” Jesus as the Savior of all people. It's also a reminder to engage in Christian community and to heal divisions among God's children.

We have something special happening on all the Sundays in January:
See page one for listings

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!

We hope you were safe and in a warm place during our recent snow storm. During these winter months, please keep yourself safe and don't take any unnecessary chances. And again Happy New Year!

*May you always feel God's blessings,
Ruth Carney
Deacons: Ruth Carney, Karolyne White*

Altar Flowers

If you would like to provide flowers for the altar, please be in touch with 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.