

# GRACE NOTES

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

Volume 16,  
Number 1  
January 2014

Grace Congregational, UCC  
PO Box 1481  
76 Salem End Road  
Framingham 01702  
508-872-3342

churchoffice@  
gracechurchucc.org

www.gracechurchucc.org

Pastor: Brad Watters  
pastor@gracechurchucc.org

Mass Conference  
www.macucc.org  
www.ucc.org (UCC)

## In this Issue

- Epiphany Service.....1
- Blue Jean Sunday.....1
- Worcester Fellowship....1
- From the Pastor.....2
- Church Calendar.....2
- Foam Collection.....3
- Kermit's Korner.....3
- Green Team.....3
- Christian Education.....4
- GWU/Book Club.....4
- Faith in Action.....4
- Storm closing.....4
- Deacons.....6
- Altar Flowers .....6

## Save The Date

Grace Church's Annual Meeting  
is on Sunday, January 26.  
Watch for a call letter in your  
mailbox later this month.



## Epiphany Service at Edwards, January 5th

We will worship with our sisters and brothers from Edwards and Plymouth Churches at 10:00 AM on January 5 at our joint Epiphany Service at Edwards Congregational United Church of Christ. Please plan to come to this joint service. It is a wonderful time to greet and reconnect with old and new friends from Edwards and Plymouth. Our last joint service was at Grace this past summer. Many, many of the attendees commented on how much they enjoyed being together. We certainly had a crowd on our back lawn!

## Blue Jean Sunday

We will have another Blue Jean Sunday on January 12. Please come comfortably dressed and help put away all the Advent and Christmas decorations after the worship service. There will be something for everyone to do, no matter what your age or physical abilities.

*Ruth Carney, Deacon*

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

In 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!



*Mary Memmott, Missions*

## From the Pastor

Dear Ones,

Do you walk around your neighborhood? I walk my dog, Briar, on the sidewalks around our part of Needham, passing one house after another. Sometimes, we encounter a house whose people have parked their car across the sidewalk, blocking it completely. I am annoyed. We may also pass by some shrubs that have overgrown the actual yard in which they are planted so that they require that Briar and I again detour off the sidewalk. Again, I experience annoyance. I may begin to have an opinion about how “some people” have a sense of entitlement that I do not admire. One more real-life example you say? Fine. We are on an evening stroll, when suddenly, someone’s automatic lawn irrigation system clicks on, throwing arcs of cold water across the sidewalk and even into the street. And I haven’t even mentioned snow removal, dog-unfriendly salt, and barking dogs outraged that we are inches on the wrong side of an invisible “fence.”

It is not hard to grow annoyed with this suburban world. It is not hard to grow annoyed with the people we encounter. After all, we’re just trying to mind our own business and get on with our lives, right?

The first point I’d like you to consider is how, when we are annoyed, we are likely to have an accompanying rationale for how right we are to be annoyed. We may even have a mental dialogue going on wherein we make the airtight case against those who have failed to get in the right line at the checkout or pick up after their dog. The person who is annoyed sees himself or herself on the moral high ground.

Perhaps at this point, you would expect the minister to point out how Jesus taught us not to be annoyed at small inconveniences. Well, there is that business about “Do not judge, so that you may not be judged,” and “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life...” from Matthew 6 and 7. But, let’s be clear, beloved. Jesus is not Oprah. Oprah and her posse are a great source for strategies and philosophies for living life. Jesus is up to something related but distinct from good advice.

What could it be?

Debbie Watters and I attend a community Messiah sing as part of each year’s season of Advent and Christmas. This year, we went to the one in Lexington, attended by a thousand people, diverse in too many ways to recount. At a very quiet, beautiful moment, someone’s baby let out a couple of fussy shrieks. Shortly after that, the two Chinese women behind me had a chat, none too quietly. There were some “shushing” sounds then. Places like concerts and churches are full of annoyances aren’t they.

Then it hit me.

The baby had been audible just when the contralto was singing, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel, ‘God with us.’” Of course! Any baby worth his onesie would fill his tiny lungs with air and holler at that! Then I also realized, that baby was waiting for the moment when everyone would be paying at-

*Continued on page four*

## January Calendar



**January 6, 13, 20, 27**

(Tentative dates)

11:00 AM Bible Study at  
Coffee Loft in Marlboro

**January 4**

10 AM Foam Collection Day

**Sunday, January 5**

(Socks for Worcester Fellowship)

10:00 AM Epiphany Service at  
Edwards

**January 6**

7:30 PM Leadership Team

**January 8**

11:30 AM Grace Women  
United meeting

**January 11**

8:00 AM Men’s Breakfast

**Sunday, January 12**

(Socks for Worcester Fellowship)

No Cans for Communion

9:00 AM Singers rehearse

10:00 AM Worship

11:30 AM Green Team Mtg.

Blue Jean Sunday (help take  
down decorations)

**Sunday, January 19**

9:00 AM Singers rehearse

10:00 AM Worship

11:30 AM Faith in Action

**January 22**

10:00 AM Book Club

**Sunday, January 26**

9:00 AM Singers rehearse

10:00 AM Worship

Congregational Meeting



## Be Green - Buy Local - All Year

After church on December 22nd the congregation enjoyed picking out carrots, onions, cabbage, and other vegetables from the church's Stearns farm winter share. Earlier in November a similar batch of winter vegetables was delivered from our winter share to the Hope Food Pantry.

How do farms like Stearns provide produce in the cold of winter? It's not any fancy new technology - just a root cellar for storing the fall's harvest, hoop houses and other coverage for winter-hardy crops, and careful planning. Producing and buying food locally cuts down on carbon emissions for transportation and strengthens our local economy. It's part of good stewardship of the earth.

If you want to buy more local produce (and other goods) on your own, there are many options besides Stearns farm, even in the winter. The Framingham Farmer's Market continues in

the winter, indoors, at the First Parish Unitarian Scott Hall, just off the Framingham Common, 24 Vernon St., on the first and third Thursday of every month, noon-5:30 (but not Jan. 2nd).

On January 16th Transition Framingham will have a table at the market and you can learn more about what they do and make a free bird feeder.

There is also an indoor winter market in Wayland, at Russell's Garden Center on Route 20, every Saturday Jan. 11- March 15, 10 a.m.- 2 p.m. Besides local produce, there is a cornucopia of local goods and a warm, colorful greenhouse to cheer your winter soul.

And if you would rather head to Natick, there is an indoor winter farmer's market there every Saturday 9 a.m-1 p.m. at the Common Church, 13 Common Street.

*Continued on page four*

### Green Team

The team is still hoping to have a comprehensive energy audit so Frank is contacting Next Step Living to try to schedule one. We are also waiting for confirmation from St. Andrew's Church about our sharing their solar energy.

We are currently reviewing the three levels of becoming a green congregation. Even though we have accomplished levels 1 and 2, and nearly all of level 3, we are committed to continuing those items that don't fall into the one-time category. The three levels are posted in the fellowship area and we urge everyone to review them and help to keep us focused on these efforts.

Grace needs your support on January 4 at the foam collection. Even an hour of your time will allow someone else to take a break from what could be a very cold (stormy?) day. Also be sure to tell your friends and neighbors to stop by with their foam! ReFoamIt recycled over 50 tons of it in 2013, so let's help them surpass that in the new year!

We will be meeting again on January 12 following the worship service. Please be there to help us do the best we can to be a Green Church!!

*Jean Burr*

## Volunteers Needed



**Come for an hour,  
Come for the day!**

**Invite family, friends and neighbors**

## Foam Recycling Day

**Saturday, January 4th  
10:00 AM to 3:00 PM**

**(Grace Church Parking Lot)**

**Remove all tape, labels &  
food particles from your Foam**

## Kermit's Korner *Continued from page three*

Finally, if you can't make it to any of these markets, you can also order local meat, eggs, produce, and other items from the delivery co-op known as Mass Local Food. They deliver once a month on Friday evenings to the First United Methodist Church on Water Street in Framingham, and all the goods are from Massachusetts producers that have been approved by the meticulous co-op board. You can find out more at [www.masslocalfood.org](http://www.masslocalfood.org). I have ordered food from this co-op for several years; the system is well-organized and the quality is excellent.

The Bible is full of prayers of thanksgiving for the bounty of the earth. But if everything on our tables is packaged, processed, and produced somewhere far away, it tends to let us forget where that bounty comes from. Bring something home from a farmer's market, hopefully with some dirt still on it, and you might change that point of view. I hope that if you haven't visited a winter farmer's market yet that you give it a try!

Mary Memmott

### To Consider

*(Editor's Note: Jean Burr has uncovered a treasure trove of inspirational little cards with messages for every day living. These will appear in Grace Notes as space allows,)*

### Stronger Together

*"Differences were meant by God not to divide but to enrich."*

J.H. Oldham

### You will need: Grace, Harmony, Tolerance

If you've ever helped a friend cook dinner in her kitchen or gone on a vacation with other people, you've probably noticed that everyone has their own way of doing things. If you go into these situations with a "my way is the right way" attitude, you're sure to get frustrated. When we allow differences to enrich us, we open ourselves up to the wealth of diversity.

### Simple Steps:

- Allow people to do things their way - and see what you can learn from it. Consider how their style or views fit with yours. This one small change can bring more harmony into your relationships.
- Widen your circle. If invited to a party or event, and you don't feel part of that particular crowd, go anyway. You never know what enriching experience may come from it.

### Christian Education

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.

### Faith in Action

Faith in Action will meet after church on Sunday, January 19th. Let's all get together and make plans for 2014. Dare we hint at performance of the "Not Ready For Anytime Players?" And we will definitely plan some after church lunches. And perhaps another game night? Come and share your ideas.

### Grace Women United

GWU will meet at the church on Wednesday, January 8th at 11:30 AM.

Lynn Burdett

### Book Club



Book Club will meet on January 22 at 10 AM. We will discuss *Mountains Beyond Mountains* by Tracy Kidder and *The Secret Keeper* by Kate Morton.

Lynn Burdett

### 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.



## Pastor's column *Continued from page two*

tention. And he, or she, nailed it. I began to smile more.

The two women behind me had never been to a Messiah sing before, clearly. I'm pretty sure only one of them spoke English. Of course! They were trying to figure out where they were in the huge book that one gets at a Messiah sing. They should be asking questions! I turned and showed them how to relate the bulletin to the score, and how there were high and low parts to sing, and how the music moved very fast. I kept checking with them and kind of laughing with them. So I was really smiling now.

My neighbors who always have a car parked across the sidewalk have an extra car in their household because their son is home, for now, and, having no other place to park, brings that extra car with him. They are so glad to have him there and to be able to help! You gotta love family. The woman whose shrub sticks out across the sidewalk loves the flowers on that bush. She can't bear to cut it back but she doesn't mind if you take some blossoms for your house. She is kind of amazed that the bush is so healthy. It makes her smile. When the automatic sprinkler came on, I yelped and broke into a run. Briar figured that fun had just broken-out and she ran with me but in that kind of bouncy, joyous way that dogs sometimes run when the game is on. That made me laugh and whoop it up some more. We flew down the block and some folks in a nearby yard turned to watch us. They began to laugh: at our ridiculousness? Sure. And maybe at seeing

the sheer joy of running down a street whooping.

What changed annoyance into something else?

Somehow, the child born in the hay of a manger grew up to tell stories with a twist, the ones we call parables. In Luke 6, he spoke to crowds about how to see the world with a twist:

*"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh."*

This is a different expectation about bad, sad things. This is a twist on reality. And then he said this:

*"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you."*

Jesus wanted to show his listeners how the world works when you see it through the eyes of the one who made it and makes it all. He called it the kingdom of God. Because they didn't understand his twisted view of the world, or maybe because they did and grasped how it threatened the status quo, they killed him.

We who have so much choice

about how we greet each other, greet each change, greet each annoyance, we can choose to ignore his view of things, to silence his clear message, to behave as if he meant nothing and does not require of us that we see things in any way other than the way we always see them. Or, we could make a different choice.

As you move away from shepherds, angels, twinkly lights, and Christmas songs, don't leave behind the newborn child, even though newborns can be annoying. Use your heart's imagination, your religious insight, and your curiosity to turn what annoys you into that which is a blessing. When you find yourself ready to judge, set your well-earned wisdom aside and consider that there is probably a different story to be learned. And when you are about to object that something isn't the way it should be, pay attention to that dissonance. It is in twisty times such as those that we glimpse the effect of some other force of light and life than our own. If you can open yourself to times like those, get ready to smile. Get ready, beloved, to laugh out loud.

*O Holy One, protector of "the other side of the story," defender of the annoying and the annoyed both, get us ready for whatever's next. We want to be prepared to laugh, to listen, and to love as you love this twist-ridden, surprising life, this blessed world. Amen.*

*Peace and Blessing,  
Brad*

## Deacons

*"I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear."* —Martin Luther King Jr.

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!*

---

Epiphany Service and  
Blue Jean Sunday  
Announcements on Page One

---

Soon it will be Epiphany and 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.

Please do not forget that we

## A Parable for the New Year: For Everything a Season

Wanting his sons to learn not to judge too quickly, a man sent each, in turn, on a quest to look at a pear tree far away and report what he saw. The first son went in winter, the second in spring, the third in summer and the fourth in fall. Finally, the father gathered the young men together. "What did you see?" he asked.

The first son reported seeing an ugly tree, bent and lifeless. The second disagreed, saying it was budding with fresh new life. The third son reported finding a tree laden with sweet-smelling, beautiful blossoms, while the fourth insisted it drooped with ripe fruit.

The father said his sons were all correct, for they'd seen the same tree, though at different seasons of its life. "Don't judge a tree — or a person — based on just one season of life," he counseled his children. "Who they are can only be known at the end, when all life's seasons have been lived.

"Furthermore," he added, "don't give up on your own life if you experience a hard season, such as winter, or you'll miss out on the renewal of spring, the joy of summer, the fulfillment of autumn."

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 December storms. During these winter months, please keep yourself safe and don't take any unnecessary chances. And again Happy New Year!

*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 for the Deacon Ministry Team  
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.

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