

GRACE NOTES

Grace is a Green Church!

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

Mark Your Calendars

Cans for Communion

June 9th will be our last cans collection until September. The pantry needs all sorts of foods, but especially tuna, peanut butter, canned goods, and cereal to stock up pantries for kids home from school. We welcome a volunteer to deliver this collection to the pantry; speak to Mary Memmott or sign up in the Fellowship Hall.

Stearns Farm Work Day

Saturday, June 22nd
See Page 3 for details

Congregational Meeting

Sunday, June 23rd
See Page 2 for details

Foam Recycling Day

Saturday, July 27th
10:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Volunteers Needed!
Speak to Jean Burr if you can lend a hand.

Five Crossroads Meetings will be Held this Summer

This summer, the congregation is invited to participate in a series of five Crossroads house meetings. The meetings will be held Monday and Tuesday evenings or Thursday morning (dates below). Sign up sheets will be in the Fellowship Hall. See related articles about this program on pages 6, 7 and 8 of this issue.

- **Monday evenings, 7:00 PM**
on July 1, 8, 22, 29, August 5
Mary Memmott hosting at the church; Linda Dunbrack facilitating
- **Tuesday evenings, 7:30 PM**
June 25, July 2, July 9, July 16, July 23
Jean Burr hosting in her home, Ruth and Frank Carneys facilitating
- **Thursday AM, 10:00 AM**
June 13th, 20th, July 11th, 18th, 25th
Linda Hilliard hosting in her home, Terri Taylor facilitating.

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Congregational Meeting

Congregational Meeting Is Sunday, June 23rd

On Sunday, June 23, 2013, Grace Congregational United Church of Christ will hold its June congregational meeting during worship. As we did a few years ago, we will integrate our business with worship, which is possible because we have no major items to be voted on. We will accept the minutes and annual report, elect the church officers and delegates, receive updates on church finances and the Crossroads process, and celebrate the congregations ministries over the past year.

June Calendar

June 1	8:00 AM	Men's Breakfast	June 14 & 15	Mass Conference UCC Annual Meeting
June 2	9:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:30 AM	Singers rehearse Worship/Communion FIA Meeting	June 16	Confirmation Sunday No Singers Rehearse Worship 10:00 AM
June 3	7:30 PM	Leadership Ministry Team	June 19	10:00 AM Book Club 2:00 PM Service at Carlyle House
June 8	12:00 PM	Boston Pride Parade	June 22	9:45 AM Grace Work Day at Stearns Farm
June 9	Cans for Communion 10:00 AM 11:30 AM 6:00 PM	No Singers Rehearse Worship/Communion Green Team Confirmation class	June 23	Grace Church Annual Meeting 9:00 AM Singers rehearse 10:00 AM Worship
June 10	7:30 PM	Women's Lectio	June 30	9:00 AM Singers rehearse 10:00 AM Worship/ Sunday School
June 12	11:45 AM	Grace Women United luncheon at Wayside Inn		





Could you be a “Farm-to-Food Bank” Volunteer?

Grace Church partners with Stearns Farm and the Framingham “Hope” Food Pantry to provide a share of fresh fruits and vegetables to the pantry throughout the harvest season. This helps pantry clients supplement canned and dried goods with fresh food as much as possible.

Farm-to-Food Bank Volunteers need to be available on a Friday afternoon (anytime between 2-7 p.m.) to pick up fresh produce at Stearns Farm (Edmands Road in Framingham). This involves weighing and bagging produce, and sometimes some light “pick-your-own”. The process takes about 1 hour. Produce is bagged, labeled, and stored in a cooler that is then delivered by the volunteer to the pantry (Concord St., Framingham) the next morning (Saturday) at 9 a.m. for distribution during pantry hours. If you are not available to bring the food to the pantry on Saturday, drop-off on Friday can sometimes be arranged.

We are looking for volunteers every Friday through mid-October. Volunteers always take home a sample of fresh herbs, flowers, and their favorite fruit or vegetable --some berries just have to eaten that day! For more information see Mary Memmott or talk to Linda Hilliard, Terri Taylor, or Ronda Yeomans -- all past volunteers. See you at the farm!

I hope I’m not the only one who has noticed and appreciated the trees around us this spring. The leaves seem to be greener and more dense than usual. It has made me think about the rainforests of the world, and how they are being demolished by the timber industry. So...I decided to do some research (in honor of Kermit) and share it here.

There are so many websites with facts and pictures that it would be impossible to suggest one or two, so I’ll just hope that you will do your own search. One thing that I have learned, however, is that every second of every day, an area the size of a football field is being cut. This means that each hour, 6000 acres are gone! The results include the loss of living space for thousands of people, the destruction of plants (many of which give us life-saving medicines), and the displacement and death of millions of animals. One thing that the sites seem to agree on is that the remaining rainforests cover from 2% to 6% of the earth’s surface, down from 14%. Hello! These rainforests are vital to our ecosystem!!

One website that I will refer to is www.Planta-Billion.org. This organization, which is connected to “The Nature Conservancy”, will plant a tree in the rain forest in Brazil for \$1.00. There is no way that I can save the world, or even the rain forests, but I can make a small difference, so I am happy to say that I was able to replant 10 trees today. What about you?

Kermit said, “Thank you. After all, I can’t do anything. I’m just a frog!”

Jean Burr

Stearns Farm Work Day – Saturday, June 22– All Welcome!

Farmers of all ages and abilities are welcome to join us at our farm work day Saturday, June 22, 9:45-noon, at Stearns Farm, Edmands Road, Framingham, followed by an optional “stone soup” lunch. We guarantee rewarding work, camaraderie, and the sense of satisfaction that comes from planting and working on a beautiful, expertly-run farm. Our work hours help us share with those in need as we collect food all season to bring to the food pantry.

Please sign up in the fellowship hall or see Mary Memmott for more information.



Sunday School Activities

Sunday School kids participated in a variety of activities in May. The very determined and physically fit confirmation class completed 12 (amazing!) miles of The Walk for Hunger with Brad, Frank and Mary. We celebrated Pentecost in service and then went upstairs to discuss our week, our prayer concerns and the meaning of the reading. One way we share our thoughts and feelings is via self-expression on t-shirts. Ronda shared with the kids some first stabs at a Grace Church t-shirt which read "Grace Cares" on the front and ultimately will list the church website on the back. Frank wore the first one at the Walk for Hunger. The idea is for the kids to personalize their t-shirts with fabric markers, but time ran out before we got to do that activity at church.

Camp Grace this Summer

Mary will be leading "CampGrace" for the kids this summer. Camp Grace will be a hands-on activity time outside the worship space which will be open to folks of any age who want to get up and move. All services will begin as intergenerational and then on certain Sundays Camp Grace will begin after the sign of peace. Mary is available to lead Camp Grace on June 23 & 30, and July 21 & 28. Any August Camp Grace sessions with Ronda are a possibility but exact dates are still to be determined. A hearty and sincere thanks to Mary for spearheading this effort.

Please help . . .

Please help us to meet our commitment to the Safe Sanctuaries promise by volunteering to be the second adult in the room during Camp Grace/Sunday School. Thank you.

Grace Congregational, UCC

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Pastor: Brad Watters
pastor@gracechurchucc.org

Grace's Donation to One Fund Boston

Grace Church members donated more than \$500 to the One Fund Boston to assist those families of the victims who were killed and the victims who were most seriously affected as a result of the tragic events during the Boston Marathon on April 15.

Grace Library grows

The Grace Church Library is going to expand a bit with a new environmental reference section. Donations of such books would be welcomed (with the understanding that some books may be deemed as not quite right for our needs.) Magazines with environmental articles are also welcomed.

We are also researching other informational magazines resources to add to the library. Stayed tuned as our library grows!

Grace Women United

GWU will have its final luncheon meeting at the Wayside Inn on Wednesday, June 12 at 11:45. Please RSVP to Nancy Brown 508-872-9036 by Monday June 10th. If you need a ride call Jean Burr 508-872-1082 or Lynn Burdett 508-872-7863.

Lynn Burdett

Book Club



Book Club will meet on Wednesday, June 19th (postponed from May 22) We will discuss MRS LINCOLN AND MRS KECKLY and pick a book for the Summer read. This will be our final meeting until Fall.

People of Grace,

This spring I feel I am on a botany kick - the colors of spring seem to me to be more intense than in previous years. I take solace in these colors of spring with all that has been happening in the world - near and far away. With our terror attack in Boston on Patriot's Day, the devastation with the tornadoes that have been touching down in Oklahoma and elsewhere, fires raging out of control, the problems in the Middle East, I was searching for the right prayer and just couldn't come up with one or find one that was just right. I shared my frustration with a minister friend and the next day the following was emailed to me:

O God, hear our prayers:

...for teachers who became shelters as they covered their children with their bodies;

...for parents whose hearts shattered at the sight of the bearer of bad news;

...for children whose last image was that of a beloved playmate, before they saw your weeping face;

...for rescuers, responders, searchers whose grief must be left at home until their work is done;

...for families whose earthly goods consist of a picture in a broken frame, a half-torn letter, a broken kitchen chair;

...for all whose beloved community has now become that shadowed valley of loss;

...for all your people, O God, hear our prayers.

(© 2013 Thom M. Shuman)

This prayer touched a place deep inside me and I hope you can find solace in it also. I don't know Thom Shuman, but I thank him in my heart.

We have several things happening this June (and July):

- Sunday, June 9 - Communion with "Cans for Communion" - please give generously this coming Sunday. We won't be having "Cans for Communion" again until September and the food pantry needs our help.

- Sunday, June 16 - Is Father's Day and also Confirmation Sunday. Please put this on your calendar and celebrate with our Confirmands: Andrea, Cameron, Ellen, Josh, Meghan and Zack. We are

planning on an outdoor service with a tent since our worship space just isn't big enough to hold the additional family members coming.

- Sunday, June 23 - We will have a guest musician on the piano. Roy Helander will be here subbing for Susan. Congregational Meeting after worship.

- Sunday, June 30 - Brad is a delegate and will be at the UCC General Synod. Terri has graciously accepted our invitation to lead worship.

- Sunday July 7 - Brad will be on vacation and we will have a lay-led service. So dress casually (shorts encouraged) and come and worship!

This summer we will be having two "Season of Sharing" worship services with our two sister churches, Edwards and Plymouth. The first is July 28th at Edwards. This is a special service about Ministry to Veterans with a guest chaplain. Please mark your calendar and attend this special service. The second "Season of Sharing" will be at Grace in August.

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!

May you always feel God's blessings,

Ruth Carney

for the Deacon Ministry Team

Ruth Carney and 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 (perhaps from your garden). 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.)



Crossroads at Grace Church

Crossroads - Why are we doing this?

Here are some of the things Grace Church has:

- a) an outstanding history of making bold decisions
- b) healthy congregational conversations as key to our identity and culture
- c) enthusiasm for new ministries
- d) willingness and delight for new ways of worshipping together
- e) a dramatic reorganization in the past 10 years
- f) a specific and trustworthy affection for each other

Here are some other things Grace Church has:

- a) Mixed feelings about our church life “now” compared to our church life “back then”
- b) Mixed feelings about our church viability today compared to five years, ten years in the future
- c) Mixed opinions about Framingham having three UCC churches
- d) Pledge and plate income that does not cover our regular expenses
- e) Mixed feelings about our building exterior, our sanctuary, the welcome-ness of our space
- f) Mixed feelings about the staff needed for our current ministries
- g) Mixed concepts and expectations for our future ministries

Things like those on this second list can sap energy and commitment. They can limit our interest in inviting people to join us for worship, for a ministry activity, or for new friendship. They can make us overly cautious about our financial commitment, about getting to know new people, or about trying out a new ministry. They can make us feel guilt and shame in several different ways - they can diminish hope and splash cold water on any fire of passion.

We have had lots of conversations and we have gathered lots of information. We have continued to grow in health (NCD biannual questionnaire), ministries (our most prominent ministries didn't exist 7 years ago), and love for this earth and each other. Somehow, we are missing some shared something. Perhaps we need to resolve

all the items on the second list? Perhaps we need to unify with a sufficiently-specific vision for church life and community ministry? Perhaps we need to move to a larger worship space?

The Crossroads Massachusetts program is “for congregations that find themselves at a crossroads and want to intentionally discern their path forward.”

We are expecting this Crossroads Massachusetts program to help us move to the next chapter of the story of Grace Congregational United Church of Christ.

Crossroads - Bold Decisions

Our target for this first phase, New Beginnings, of the Crossroads Massachusetts program is to make a Bold Decision about the church's future. Well, we've got an outstanding history of bold decisions, right?

Here's a partial list. What would you add?

- Decision to plant a church in “South Framingham” in 1872
- Repeated building projects to enlarge and improve the church
- Initiate a Spanish-speaking ministry in Framingham
- Support and host the first “wet shelter” in Framingham
- Approve a Statement of Inclusivity to become an Open and Affirming church
- Acknowledge our own “fiscal cliff” and set the action of selling our building as a consequence of not exceeding a threshold of measures of growth by a particular date.
- Decide to build a new building
- Embark on Redevelopment
- Decide to buy a “house” at 76 Salem End Road and make it a church

Crossroads at Grace Church

Crossroads - House Meeting #1 was Worship!

The first of the six House Meetings is somewhat of an overview of the New Beginnings perspective on sustainable, vital churches. So we shared this material through the course of our morning worship service on May 19. It was a little tricky to convey lots of information and yet retain a worship experience! Herewith is a summary of the primary points made in House Meeting #1, along with some excerpts from the worship service on May 19.

The description of congregational health showed up in the prayer on the right.

House Meeting #1 presented four “marks of thriving congregations.” They should be familiar to us from various initiatives in the past, e.g., NCD, right?

1) A Compelling Sense of Mission driven by the Gospel

This combines an understanding of what we as a congregation are good at, what we aim to be doing, and how that is connected by our Christian heritage and the story of Jesus. For example, when we, at Grace Church, say “Faith In Action,” we are pretty good at the “Action.” And what, then, is the connection that we all understand between that action and faith?

2) Resources and ability to mobilize resources for a common mission

This says that vibrant churches require resources, which is money, building, etc., and, mostly, people. It requires inspiring/empowering lay leader-

Prayer for Relational and Spiritual Health

Dear God, we pray for health in our congregation. We pray for physical health. We also pray for healthy relationships. We long to share strong friendships. We long to trust each other. We seek to be able to speak truth to each other without fear. You are the source of our spiritual health. Help us to stop our immature ways; to leave behind pettiness, defensiveness, blaming, shaming, self-righteousness, gossip, and shallowness. Help us to mature; to grow into understanding, acceptance, forgiveness, humility, and love. We ask this in the name of the one who showed what love can do and what love can be, Jesus Christ. Amen.

ship and inspiring/empowering clergy leadership. One kind of evidence that a church cares about leadership is to see how it trains leaders.

3) Contextual Relevance

Vital congregations understand their surroundings. They understand that new possibilities for ministry emerge when the needs of others, people in the community, are understood.

4) Passion and Energy

In vital congregations, people have a strong enthusiasm for the ministries of the church. Such congregations move with passion and energy into the mis-

sion they claim. Their members have a faith that makes a difference in their daily lives. They are willing to share their story with actions that indicate that God is alive and well in their midst.

May 19 was Pentecost Sunday and we recall that the gifts of Pentecost were given in public. Pentecost was no private, holy meditation with the source of being. Pentecost was out-loud, surrounded by people who were not members of anything, in the public square, and a complete surprise. This is a root paradigm for the church of the future.

Worship closed with a blessing, drawn from Philippians 1. Here is an excerpt:

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.

Crossroads at Grace Church

Crossroads - What's in a Name?

The Massachusetts Conference has made a program available, subsidized the cost of the program, and provided facilities and facilitators to the program. Grace Church has signed on. What is this program? We have called it “Crossroads” for short. It is also known by other names and there are additional terms related to this program. This column is a guide to those names.

- **Crossroads:** Crossroads Massachusetts, a new Mass Conference ministry, is designed for congregations that find themselves at a crossroads, want to intentionally discern their path forward, and commit to head out on that path. We are one of seven churches in Massachusetts who are participating in this 2013, second round of Crossroads Massachusetts. To partner with the churches through the first season of assessment, discernment, and bold decision-making, the conference has brought in a program called New Beginnings.

- **New Beginnings:** New Beginnings is a program of our denominational partner, the Disciples of Christ. The program helps churches answer the question, “What is God calling our congregation to do and be in this time and place?” It includes the Assessment, the Cluster Training Event, the Report from the Assessment, and the manual for the House Meetings called the Leader’s Guide.

- **Assessment:** New Beginnings sent Rev. Doug Pfeiffer to gather

information about Grace Church. In the April issue of Grace Notes, Linda Dunbrack described Doug’s work and visit to Framingham.

- **Cluster Training Event:** New Beginnings led teams from the participating churches through a training event at the UCC Conference Center at the beginning of May. We sent Ruth and Frank Carney, Karolyne White, Terri Taylor, Linda Dunbrack, and Pastor Brad Watters as our team. During the training, we worked through various workshop exercises and the Report from the Assessment of our church.

- **Report from the Assessment:** The Report from the Assessment has two parts. The first part tells the story of Grace Church, looks at financial and membership data through a particular lens of church vitality, and offers opinion about where Grace Church is relative to several “vital signs” of a sustainable ministry. This first part was distributed to the congregation on May 19th and copies are available at church. The second part is data about Framingham demographics.

- **House Meetings:** The true heart of the Crossroads process is the process of the House Meetings. They are designed to bring small groups from the congregation through a process consisting of six, structured meetings. The meetings evolve and deepen our understanding of what possibilities lie ahead, of what resources we have to engage the possibilities, and of what commitment we are willing to make to the possi-

bilities we choose. We hope that we will discern a Godly leading toward a bold decision.

Bold Decision: Crossroads coined the term Bold Decision to help congregations come to an end to deliberation and discernment and choose a future. The choice needs to be one we make together yet we know that not everyone ends up agreeing with such choices. So, part of the deciding is agreeing to decide, accepting the decision we make together, and committing to the path chosen.

- **Implementation:** The implementation is what follows the New Beginnings program and might be considered the second phase. The Conference will assist us to create Working Groups. Pastors and lay leaders engaged in the Crossroads process of discernment and decision making will be invited to meet with each other for mutual support, creative engagement, and spiritual inspiration. The conference will link churches with Mentors (or coaches). After a church has decided its direction, mentors will be available for ongoing assistance as the congregation takes steps along the path it has chosen. There is a fee for these services. The Conference states, “Your Conference is committed to Crossroads and will put staff and financial resources to work to make it a success. Regional ministers will serve as “case managers” for participating congregations. Other staff will provide coaching and advice along the way.”