

# GRACE NOTES

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

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Yes! Spring is Coming!!!



- **March 8th (3rd Sunday in Lent)** Communion Service with Cans for Communion
- **March 15th (4th Sunday in Lent)**
- **March 22nd (Palm Sunday)** Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem.
- **March 28th (Passion Sunday)** We will re-hear the passion story with many of the readings from Tennebrae.
- **April 5th Easter Sunday** Celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ with communion and we will be bringing the Alleluias back to worship.

*For more information, see the Deacon's column on page six.*

## World Day of Prayer 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.

Dear Ones,

*He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. He said, 'My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.'* -Genesis 18:2-5a

I have always been charmed by stories of travelers in certain parts of the world who encounter hospitality in ordinary households. I hear some recurring themes in these stories. The visitor is shown to the most comfortable place to sit, be it a nice chair or the better pile of skins. There is some bustling around, perhaps the assembly of something to eat or the heating of a pot of water for tea or coffee. Conversation is pleasant as both host and visitor without anxiety allow the time to grow and flower in conviviality. The food and drink are served and more pleasantness is sustained. At some point, the talk turns to whatever business has brought this meeting into being.

The fascinating and inspiring book of a few years ago “Three Cups of Tea” drew its title from the measurement of that point at which conversation could turn more purposeful in some households of Pakistan.

Have you encountered a

practice like this yourself? Do you have a habitual way that you handle visits, perhaps learned when you were little? I confess that I don't. I kind of make it up on the fly. It depends on who the visitor is, what else I'm doing, is this an expected visit or a drop-in, the time of day, and, perhaps most importantly, what the purpose of the visit is. I don't necessarily have to get down to business right away, but often enough, that's the most significant aspect of the visit for me and the strongest determinant for what hospitality I will offer.

That is very different from the stories of hospitable hosts that I find so charming.

Where does my habit come from? Where does yours? Do you consider your habits of hospitality to be Christian?

With that last question, you can hear me asking whether your habits mimic the practices of Jesus. We have very few images of Jesus' example or idea of hospitality as such. One that we should remember, of course, is the Breakfast on the Beach, in the Gospel of John, Chapter 21. Another story is the powerful moment, when in response to the query, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?” in Matthew 25, Jesus

*Continued on page two*

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## LET JUSTICE ROLL: BROKEN ON ALL SIDES

### A Film and Discussion about Criminal Justice, Race, and Poverty

Come learn more about our criminal justice system and the systemic issues that underlie protests across America. Grace Church will host a community screening of “Broken All Sides,” an award-winning documentary about inequities within our criminal justice system.

The event will take place on Sunday, March 8th from 3-5:30 pm, at Plymouth Church and is open to the public. Attendance is free, but donations to defray the cost of the screening will be gratefully accepted.

“Broken on All Sides” focuses on mass incarceration across the nation and the intersection of race and poverty within criminal justice. Through interviews with people on many sides of the criminal justice system, this documentary aims to answer questions and provoke questions that have long avoided public scrutiny.

After the film, a representative from EPOCA -Ex-Prisoners and Prisoners Organizing for Community Advancement-will speak to current efforts to reform the criminal justice system in Massachusetts. You will also have the opportunity to discuss the film and its implications with one another and find out more about how you can get involved.

If you have any questions, contact Linda Dunbrack. If you can contribute snack food for the movie, contact Ronda Yeomans to coordinate.

# One Great Hour of Sharing Challenge



Before the television news reporters are on the scene or the latest updates pop up on your phone screen, you are already present with people in some of the most chaotic and disrupted situations of our world. Through sustained partnerships and empowering response made possible by the United of Christ's One Great Hour of Sharing offering, you are changing lives.

This collection funds ministries of disaster response, sustainable development, and refugee relief. They are spiritual practices of radical hospitality for the well-being of all. Through One Great Hour of Sharing, children have clothes, elders have food and church congregations have an immediate purpose.

This year, let's aim to collect at least \$500! This would be more than last year's \$296. Let's show ourselves that we can raise funds for a good cause! Special envelopes for your donation will be available on March 8 and we will make our offering in worship on March 15.

## Missions Ministries

### “Fresh Food for Framingham Growing our Own” Sunday, March 29, 2-4 pm Grace Church

Connect with Your Neighbors -- New Gardeners, Experienced Gardeners, Total Beginners, All are Welcome

Join us for an open space meeting to share ideas about how we can increase food production in Framingham among home gardeners, seed savers and swappers, community gardeners, container gardeners, food pantry representatives, and those who want to grow food but don't know where to start. Share ideas from small to large -- how could you grow a few tomatoes this year? -- to how could we transform empty lots in town to productive gardens? There will be something for everyone.

We'll have snacks, coffee, tea, and a warm place to meet.

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

shared this startling and eternal insight, “...just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” Do you root your practice of hospitality in those stories?

I am asking another question too. Are your personal habits of hospitality informed or drawn from the rich history of hospitality in Christian communities, such as churches, such as homes? Some of these are revealed in the Acts of the Apostles and the letters at the back of the Bible. Consider this instruction from The Letter to the Hebrews 13, “*Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*”

The anonymous author of this book of the Bible is referring to the story excerpted at the beginning of this Note. That story is about Abraham, who is sitting outside the tent where he and Sarah are resting.

That story is the foundation of Christian hospitality, of Jewish hospitality, and, it turns out, of Islamic hospitality. The Pakistanis whose practice included those three cups of tea? Their cultural practice of hospitality is instructed by the hospitality of Islam. That hospitality of theirs is further illustrated by a story about one of Islam's heroes.

Abu Talha welcomed a hungry traveler into his home even though there was very little to eat. So he instructed his wife Umm Sulaim to bring whatever

provisions they had and give it to the guest. As the guest ate his fill, these two devout Muslims pretended to eat in the dim candlelight.

Perhaps we should have a conversation about what practices we think are best, most welcoming, most nourished by the tradition we claim, and most holy. Holy? Why holy you ask? Well, here is the first line of Genesis 18, omitted earlier. It is a good verse to memorize today!

*The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. - Genesis 18:1*

Peace and Blessing,  
Pastor Brad



In the poem “Clearly Chaos,” the author, my friend The Writer Fox, calls winter the “relentless season.”

It has felt that way a little to me and maybe to you too. It has been particularly hard to figure out what it means to be green in a New England winter with its weeks of bitter cold and its towering mountains of winter snow. I don't like to complain, but I'm going to anyway because there are lots of problems around!

Take the whole composting thing. Now, it is a “greener” solution to save food scraps from the garbage and the

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**The Green Team will meet this Sunday, March 8th at 11:30 AM.**

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garbage disposal. We know that adding food waste through our disposal into our outflowing pipes creates organically rich liquid that requires more energy intensive processing before it can leave the water system in town than if we hadn't dumped the wilted lettuce down the drain and flipped on the InSinkErator. We know that it is wasteful to swell the refuse stream (i.e., garbage bags) with our potato peelings when they can be composted in a composter or even a pile of vegetation in the yard and help sustain our garden fertility. But what are we to do when the compost bin is buried!

***Or consider this.***

Every day that the temperature is below the historic normal means that we are running the furnace more than

we had planned. We know that the fossil fuels we burn create by-product gases and particles that contribute to global climate change. We know that it is “greener” to keep our thermostats down to 68 degrees to reduce how much fuel we use. But what are we to do when the weather gets colder! Lower the dial some more and put on another sweater? Brrrr!

***And then there's our nutritional health.***

We know that we are supposed to eat lots of fresh vegetables like lettuce and celery and spinach and all. We know that our bodies can use the nutrients in fresh veggies to combat the stress of cold, colds, and the winter blues. But we also know that those fresh bunches of basil and dill are not growing in Framingham this February! So they have to come from way, way far away to get here and, in the process, use more of those fossil fuels and create more of the by products of that fossil fuel use. We know we should be eating like our New England ancestors 150 years ago - potatoes, winter squash, apples, onions, turnips, etc. and the fresh vegetables we “put up” back in August. But we didn't “put up” anything last August and now we have to buy celery from California!

Maybe I'll just make like a frog, get down under the cold mud, and slow my little heart-rate way, way down.

*See you in May, Kerm  
(As told to Pastor Brad)*

## Volunteer Drivers Needed

Family Services Coalition (FSC) is an all-volunteer organization that provides homeless families placed at a local Natick motel with a wide range of services. Transportation is a major FSC program. But, FSC is in need of volunteer drivers to provide rides for motel families to medical appointments, Framingham DTA and WIC offices, food pantries, public schools, or other local destination. Volunteers may wait while families complete their tasks/appointments or leave and ask the families to call for pick up. No minimum time commitment is required.

FSC also needs volunteer van drivers to drive motel families to the supermarket, laundromat, and food pantry in a 14-passenger van available Mondays to Fridays 10 am. to 3 pm. The volunteer picks up and returns the van at Common Street Church, Natick. A minimum once-a-month commitment is preferred.

If interested, contact Eva Benda, FSC Coordinator by email [evabenda@verizon.net](mailto:evabenda@verizon.net) or call her at 508-872-7125.

*Ronda Yeomans*

## Storm Closings

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.



## An invitation to the Grace Congregation Join a Lenten Fast ... From Carbon

2015 is the fifth year that the UCC will provide a day-by-day opportunity to fast from carbon as a Lenten discipline. Initiated by the UCC and endorsed by other denominations and faith groups, people of every Christian perspective - and people who are not Christians - have benefited from this opportunity to become more conscious and conscientious in their daily lives.

We invite you to join us as we commit to fasting from carbon during Lent. **Throughout Lent, participants will receive a daily email with the day's suggested carbon-reducing activity. Many will also suggest ways to engage others. Each daily email will also provide material that can be the basis for a weekly congregational conversation.**

The activities range from the very simple: eliminate "vampire" electrical use; to the moderately challenging: take "military showers;" reduce your driving speed; to more long term: buy local produce and consider getting involved in a community garden.

We don't expect everyone to be able to do everything suggested; but serious consideration of each day's activity can raise people's awareness, inviting them to think more carefully about how their day-to-day living impacts the environment and make the changes they can. The intention is to provide do-able actions which can make a difference; not to overwhelm people, or make them feel bad about themselves, or cause them to feel that the situation is hopeless. We want people to empower people so they can challenge themselves to do more.

Congregations that participate are encouraged to gather weekly to share their experiences, support one another, compare notes, share resources and pray.

See who else is embracing this initiative by reading an article by Emily Schappacher published on February 24, 2014: UCC Congregations Invited to Join Annual Ecumenical Carbon Fast. [www.macucc.org/carbonfast](http://www.macucc.org/carbonfast) or check out the Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/carbonfast](http://www.facebook.com/carbonfast).

God is calling us to be the change we long to see. Let us engage this spiritual discipline, grateful for all God has entrusted to us, and trusting that with God all things are possible.

### Grace Women United

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

Lynn Burdett

### Book Club



Book Club will meet on Wednesday, Wednesday, March 25th, at 10AM. We will be discussing ORACLE BONES by Peter Hessler

Lynn Burdett

### Cans for Communion • March 8th

All non-perishable food welcome, but especially seeking canned tuna and canned vegetables.

## March Calendar

### Sunday, March 1

#### Cans for Communion

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

### Friday, March 6

World Day of Prayer (Page 1)

### Saturday, March 7

8:00 AM Men's Group

### Sunday, March 8

#### 3rd Sunday of Lent

#### Cans for Communion

9:00 AM Singers rehearse  
10:00 AM Worship  
Communion  
11:30 AM Green Team mtg.  
3:00 PM Justice Film (pg. 2)

### Thursday, March 12

11:30 PM Grace Women United

### Sunday, March 15

#### 4th Sunday of Lent

#### One Great Hour of Sharing Collection (pg. 3)

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

### Sunday, March 22

#### Palm Sunday

9:00 AM Singers rehearse  
10:00 AM Worship

### Wednesday, March 25

10:00 AM Book Club

### Sunday, March 29

#### Passion Sunday

9:00 AM Singers rehearse  
10:00 AM Worship  
2:00 PM Fresh Food (pg. 3)  
4:00 PM Noelle Dattilo  
Ordination in Boxborough

### Sunday, April 5

#### Easter Sunday

9:00 AM Singers rehearse  
10:00 AM Worship

**Daffodil hope**

*In Lisa Genova's novel Love Anthony, Olivia lives on Nantucket Island, where winter is long but daffodils bloom even while it's still cold. In one scene, she watches the flowers "shivering in the wind, impossibly bright and fragile and brave against the cold grayness."*

*Struggling with deep grief, Olivia finds hope in the bright yellow blooms after a long, bleak winter. She embraces the daffodil as a sign that summer will come again – and that "life will return to her as well."*

*In Christ, God gives us hope that sometimes appears vibrant against the grayness of earthly life. We cling to it because we've seen the promise made good before – winter yielding to summer, a new beginning granted – and we trust that new life will return to us, as well.*

People of Grace,  
As I write this, the weather report is again saying snow for Sunday evening - snow on Tuesday night turning to rain - snow on Thursday. It is hard to believe Daylight Savings Time begins in the wee hours of March 8th and Spring begins on March 20th.

Our Lenten Journey to Easter began on Ash Wednesday, February 18th.

- 3rd Sunday in Lent - March 8, (Communion Service with Cans for Communion) Don't forget to turn your clocks ahead one hour on Saturday - daylight savings time begins.

- 4th Sunday in Lent - March 15
- Palm Sunday - March 22, Jesus' triumphant entry into Je-

rusalem. We will be having this service one week earlier than the calendar indicates.

- Passion Sunday - March 29, we will re-hear the passion story with many of the readings from Tennebrae.

- Easter Sunday - April 5, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ with communion and we will be bringing the Alleluias back to worship.

Please continue to keep the world in your prayers. While you are praying, please keep our country in your prayers. Pray for our community, pray for our church as we continue our next steps in our future story.

Please do not forget that we care about your wellbeing, if we can be of any help, please be in touch. Please keep our congregation in your prayers. God is with us and among us! God does and will provide!

During our winter weather, our prayers are that you stay safe and well and please don't take any unnecessary chances.

*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, Deacon*

For various reasons, mostly weather related, Faith in Action Team has cancelled its meetings in the last 2 to 3 months. We will make an attempt in March to meet following worship on the 15th!

Please plan to spend a bit of time with us to decide on spring programs, which have been tabled this winter. Among others, we will discuss dates for the following:

- A field trip to the Water Fresh Farm in Holliston for a tour, a visit to the gift shop, a lunch or snack in their cafe.

- A seminar (open to guests) in the spring about organizing one's "stuff" to be given by a lady who has been highly recommended by two of our members.

- Do we want to have a booth this year at the Earth Day Festival on April 25? If so, who can be there and what do we promote?

- Let's also discuss a meal out some Sunday after church: Owen O'Leary's on Route 9 in Southboro offers a brunch menu until 2:00 pm and some very reasonable early-bird 3-course dinners starting at 2:00 p.m.

*Jean Burr*

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## Ordination of Noelle Dattilo

A wonderful new minister has joined the staff of the Worcester Fellowship. Noelle Dattilo has the special charge of prison minister. She will be ordained at her home church, Boxborough UCC on March 29th. Attending ordinations is an interesting, moving, and rewarding part of our covenant with the other UCC churches and the new ministers among us. We are all invited.