

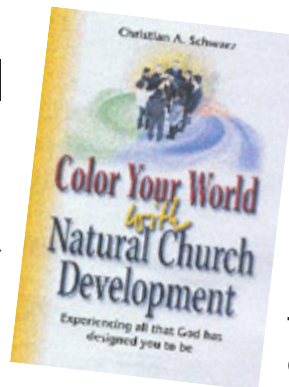
GRACE NOTES

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

Grace Begins Renewal

April 27 saw the launch of Grace Church's long-awaited redevelopment program. At a meeting after church, Linda Dunbrack presented an overview of what we can expect over the next five weeks and into 2009.

Linda explained that the Natural Church Development program is designed to help Grace Church begin a journey of renewal. "It involves listening to what God has in mind for us, being open to change, and being willing to make a long-term commitment."



Three Color Potluck Dinner

Sunday, May 18
5:00 PM

This dinner (based on the colors green, red and blue) is open to the entire Grace church family. The dinner has been scheduled early (5:00 to 7:00 PM) so that children can attend as well.

Come with a potluck dish that represents one of the three theme colors – green, red and blue. (e.g., **Red:** tomato sauce, red peppers, red bliss potatoes, apples; **Green:** salad, asparagus; **Blue:** blueberries, blue frosting, M&Ms)*. If you have done the Color Your World profile in a discussion group - wear your color. It will be fun to see who is a Martha, Jonah, Thomas and so on.

Scheduled for the midpoint in the Natural Church Development campaign, this will be a fun, fellowship dinner (and colorful!).

You do not have to be a participant in a redevelopment discussion group to attend. Just come for the fun - and the good food.

** Can't think of a food that fits the color scheme? Not a problem - contribute whatever dish you feel like.*

See page four for a Question and Answer column about the "Color Your World" campaign and "Natural Church Development."

Natural Church Development has been used by more than 50,000 churches in 70 countries with impressive results. NCD has been cited as the framework for spiritual and numerical growth in participating churches..

Linda explained that redevelopment is about transforming ourselves into a healthy, contagious, sustainable faith community.

Grace Church members are encouraged to participate in a five-week program designed to lay a foundation for understanding Natural Church Development. There will be discussion groups, and activities (see pot luck dinner announcement on this page) to help us all understand key principles and concepts, and to learn more about ourselves as a congregation.

On page five, there is a listing of small group meetings. Please consider signing up to participate in one of these groups.

Grace Notes

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May 2008

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Dear Ones,

In the book we call Genesis, God comes to Noah like God comes to many people in the Bible. As we “learn to discern” what God is calling us to do, we look to these stories to help our hearing improve!

In this story, God doesn’t expect Noah to be a prophet and transmit powerful messages to the people of Israel. God doesn’t tell Noah to pick up and leave for a distant country. God doesn’t expect Noah to give birth to a savior. Noah has a humbler task.

Make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch.

This moment from a very old story sheds light upon some aspects of God’s call to each of us.

For one thing, Noah was over 500 years old when this conversation took place. Perhaps God recognized that by that age Noah probably had learned a thing or two. Given what there was to learn in those days, I think we can be pretty sure that Noah knew how to make a seaworthy boat. God was just giving him the specs. I think that God asked something from Noah that Noah already knew how to do. The lesson for each of us is that most of the time, God calls us to do things we already know how to do.

So, as you discern what God is calling you to do, a good place to start is to figure out what you do now. What is it that you are good at? What do you like to do? There are times - I know there are - when you have been doing something and felt energized and excited (even passionate!) As we discern what God is calling Grace Congregational United Church of Christ to do, a good place to start is to figure out what we do now and what we know how to do and what we love to do.

By suggesting this, I’m NOT hoping that you or our church will avoid trying something new! We need to be doing something new to continue

to love this life as our creating God loves this life. If we have been paying attention to the processes we call evolution, we know that “the creation”

is not a one time thing but a rich and fascinating process that is still creating. That is how God loves this life, this world: so much that the wonder of creation is a continuing song of joy.

Today, take a look at what happened with our ancestor Noah. By doing what he already knew how to do – and doing it because he understood that God spoke to him and asked him to do it - he saved every one of us who lives and breathes today. To celebrate, God painted a rainbow all across the sky!

We are entering the next phase of our redevelopment using the Natural Church Development framework. That framework introduces us to new terminology and some new ways of thinking about our church and ourselves. We have learning and talking and projects ahead of us as we seek to retool our habits of listening and looking for God’s leading in our lives - and our lives together. While there are new things to learn, they serve to enable us to rediscover our strength and purpose, our openness and ability to serve, our sense of God’s love for each one of us and God’s love for Grace Congregational United Church of Christ.

Now I don’t want to scare anyone but I feel it is my responsibility to say this to each of you. By listening to what God is saying to you and following that guidance as you do what you know how to do, there is the distinct possibility that you will turn out to be the one who saves, the one who brings life.

I beg you to pay attention to what you can do and to listen to how God is speaking to you. I sure do like to see rainbows.

Peace and Blessing,
Pastor Brad

Congregational Meeting is Sunday, June 8

Grace Church's congregational meeting will be held on Sunday, June 8, at 11:30 AM. The agenda will be sent out in mid May. A light lunch will be served and child care will be provided.

Annual Reports

Annual Reports from Ministry Teams and some Task Teams are due by May 15. Electronic versions may be sent to Kab at office@gracechurchucc.org. Leave typed reports in the office mail slot.


Setting aside the bylaws

At the congregational meeting, the Central Council is going to recommend setting aside the bylaws for a period of time in regards to membership on

Ministry Teams. One part of the Redevelopment Program focuses on finding the right ministry for members. This means that people participate in activities around their interests and passions - versus simply filling in spaces on teams. It's too soon in the Redevelopment process to start working on this. So - members of existing Ministry Teams will be invited to stay on a bit longer (probably until January 2009). However, if there are some team members who feel ready to step down in June - that's okay as well. This will be discussed and voted on at the June meeting.

Meanwhile - all Ministry Teams have been asked to develop a list of their key team activities.

Church calendar - May

May 2, 3	Women's Retreat in Cohasset	7:00 PM	NCD meeting
May 3	8:00 AM Men's Group	May 16	Turning Point Shelter
May 4	Cans for Communion	May 17	UCC Peace & Justice Fair
 Small Group Meetings	8:30 AM NCD meeting 10:00 AM Worship 11:30 AM NCD meeting 4:00 PM Central Assn. meeting	May 18	8:30 AM NCD meeting 10:00 AM Worship 11:30 AM NCD Meeting Socks to Worcester 5:00 PM Natural Church Development Dinner all invited
May 5	10:30 AM Bible Study		
May 6	7:30 PM Central Council	May 19	10:30 AM Bible Study 7:00 PM Deacons
May 7	10:00 AM Book Club 7:00 PM Healing Worship	May 21	7:00 PM Worship 7:30 PM Stewards
May 8	7:00 PM NCD meeting	May 22	7:00 PM NCD meeting
May 10	Youth for Darfur	May 25	8:30 AM NCD meeting 10:00 AM Worship 11:30 AM NCD Meeting
May 11	8:30 AM NCD meeting 10:00 AM Worship 11:30 AM NCD Meeting	May 26	10:30 AM Bible Study
May 12	10:30 AM Bible Study	May 28	Eat at Eagles! 7:00 PM Worship 
May 13	7:30 PM Faith in Action meeting	May 29	7:00 PM NCD meeting
May 14	11:30 AM GWU 7:00 PM Worship		
May 15	Annual Report Deadline		

Reminder: June 8 - Congregational Meeting

Grace begins Redevelopment Program

Over the next several weeks, you'll be hearing about the "Color Your World" campaign and "Natural Church Development," and you will be asked to participate in activities designed to help Grace Church begin a journey of renewal. Here are a few questions and answers to help you understand the path that lies ahead for our church.



What is "redevelopment" and how does it relate to "Natural Church Development?"

Our congregation is at a major crossroads in its history with a critical decision to make. Will we choose a new path called "redevelopment" that leads toward greater health and vitality, or will we continue along the same path of a slow decline in membership and depletion of resources toward eventual extinction? Redevelopment is about transforming ourselves into a healthy, contagious, sustainable faith community. It requires that a longing to discover what it is God has in mind for us, an openness to change and new perspectives, and a willingness to make a long-term commitment to the process.

Natural Church Development is a framework for understanding what a healthy, vital church does and how that can lead to both spiritual and numerical growth. After looking at different options and talking to other redevelopment ministers, Pastor Brad Watters feels that the Natural Church Development framework would work well here with a few adaptations. Natural Church Development is being used by more than 50,000 churches in 70 countries, and is grounded in extensive

research that crosses denominational and national boundaries.

Why are we beginning redevelopment now?

Our church took the first step toward redevelopment when it hired Pastor Brad in 2006 and asked him to lead the church through a process of redevelopment. We could not have begun redevelopment when Brad first arrived, although certainly many steps to lay the groundwork have been laid in the past two years. We moved into a new building, and we needed to settle. We had a new minister, and Brad needed to get to know us. We also simply needed a breather. Now is the time to start down the path of redevelopment.

Couldn't we just advertise more and invite people to come visit us for a service, or build a new chapel and look more "church-like?"

It would be nice if it were so simple. All churches would be filled to overflowing if all it took was advertisements and beautiful buildings to fill the pews. We can get people to visit us once, but what makes people come back and then decide to stay? Right now - we know that Grace offers visitors a warm and

friendly handshake. But there's much more to choosing to attend a church than a friendly "hello" and a welcoming building. Grace has to look at itself - who are we - what do we offer visitors and prospective members that supports and inspires them spiritually?

What is the Color Your World campaign, and how long will it take?

The Color Your World campaign is an intensive six-week program designed to lay a solid foundation for understanding Natural Church Development. Starting in May, there will be discussion groups, and activities to help us all understand key principles and concepts, and to learn more about ourselves as a congregation. Worship will incorporate many of the themes of the Color Your World Campaign. But come June - we won't be able to look at each other and say "We're now redeveloped." It is a growth process - it is about understanding ourselves better. We're about to take a first step, but it will take time and effort on our part before we will feel like a different church.

What's the purpose of the small group discussions? Why don't we have just one big, after church meeting on this topic?

NCD is not easy - it's not one meeting and we're suddenly renewed. There's a lot of work involved in discovering who we are and then becoming a new church. Not all aspects of the Color Your World campaign will appeal to everyone. There's a

book to read - some will love it; some prefer not to do reading. That's okay. The groups are designed to involve everyone regardless of whether reading or looking at diagrams is appealing to you.

What if I do not have the time or inclination to get involved at this time?

Of course the Team would like every church member involved, but we know that time and interest are not the same for every member. But we would ask that you be open to this undertaking. Consider giving it a try, especially the small group meetings. And if you don't care for an aspect of this program - there will be other activities that might appeal more. Be involved in this process as much as you can, remembering that it is YOUR church that is being renewed. We would encourage you to at least check it out - and see what it is all about

If you chose not to join us in this particular part of the journey, please respect the hard work and effort of those who are participating with your words and actions. Speak to Pastor Brad or any of the Redevelopment Task Team members to share your thoughts.

What will be different when we're "done?"

This question tends to provoke anxiety, because the answer is unclear. God has something to do with the answer, and so do each of us. Our church is unique and will have its own unique outcome. Working together as a group - we will find a future

Small Group Meetings



Meetings run for five weeks; each session will be an hour or less. Although it is preferable to stay with your group, it is okay to switch groups if something comes up and you cannot attend your meeting (all groups will be working on the same materials at the same time)

Sundays, May 4, 11, 28, 25 June 1 (at Grace Church)

8:30 AM - Terri Taylor, facilitator

11:30 AM - Linda Dunbrack, facilitator

11:30 AM - Brad Watters, facilitator

Thursday, May 8, 15, 22, 29 June 5 (at Grace Church)

7:00 PM - Ellie Crawford/Brad Watters, facilitators

If you missed the Natural Church Development meeting on Sunday and wish to sign up for one of the small groups - or have questions - contact Linda Hilliard at linda@hilliardcommunications.com. Or simply come to a session.

for Grace Church. No textbook can tell us that; only the Grace Church congregation can truly create a future.

Of course, if all we do is talk about redevelopment and Natural Church Development, not much is likely to happen. However, if we collectively put the principles of Natural Church Development into practice, we can expect to see changes in the growth rate of the church.

When will we find out the survey results from the kick-off event?

The survey results will be discussed in the small groups. It is important to understand the results in their context.

What makes this process different from every other visioning process we've had

before?

There are some members who are going to say "well, here we go again." To some extent, they are right, although this is not a visioning program. We are once again trying to recreate Grace Church in a new - better - image. But is this bad? Aren't we a congregation that wants to grow and thrive? If we don't undertake redevelopment, we will stagnate. The alternative is to do nothing. For some, that may be appealing. But what kind of church will Grace be in five years (will we even exist?) if we don't undertake renewal in 2008?

Redevelopment Team: Nancy Brown, Ruth Carney, Ellie Crawford, Linda Dunbrack, Linda Hilliard, Terri Taylor, Brad Watters

Ministry Teams

Stewards

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

[stewards@
gracechurchucc.
org](mailto:stewards@gracechurchucc.org)

The Book Club selection for May 7th (postponed from April 23rd) is *Lost and Found* by Carolyn Parkhurst. We meet at 10:00AM at church.

GWU will meet on May 14th. Please bring a bag lunch. Coffee and dessert will be served. Current plans are to go to the movies after the meeting. Movie selection TBD.

Stewards

Room changes

By the time this issue is being read, most all who have been in the building will have noticed that a major change has taken place in the upper level rooms. The parlor is now the Sunday School room, the small room in the front of the building is the child care room, and the parlor has moved to the back corner room, previously used for child care. Although not yet complete, the move has proved to be a successful solution to the occasional annoyance of "happy feet" during Sunday services, as well as a better use of our space. There is an ongoing discussion about using the room at the end of the hall for a library. Hopefully, there will be news about this before our next issue.

Cleaning Service

The process of hiring a cleaning service is nearly complete. A decision will be made soon. It is important for all to realize, however, that this will not negate the need for all of us to take care of trash and clean up after events for which we are responsible. We have recently installed two clocks in upstairs rooms and a doorbell at the rear entrance

Youth Happenings

- The youth got together after the presentation on Darfur and came up with some great ideas for an event to be held in May to take advantage of our outdoor space. We'd like to get as many people involved as possible! Some of the ideas were: Getting a speaker to come, running a looped presentation on Darfur, setting up some workstations to sign on-line petitions, a letter writing table, a young kids section, Oly-mini's to tie in with the Olympics, sell foods found in the region, developing a poetry page, or a poetry/song contest or coffeehouse. If you'd like to work with the youth in planning and/or serving at this event, just let one of us know!
- The Grace Youth Group is open to all youth in grades 6-12. It is open to members of Grace and their friends, regardless of faith tradition. For more information, contact **Pastor Brad** or **Terri Taylor**.

Paying Our Own Denominational Dues

The Stewards are asking members to voluntarily pay their Massachusetts Conference denominational dues for 2008. The amount is \$17.40 per adult member (not family unit).



Although that isn't a significant amount for most of us, the total amount for Grace does put a dent in our income, and we would appreciate having this cost defrayed by individual payments. Please make checks out to Grace Church and write Conference Dues on the memo line.

This is not mandatory and by no means should it become a burden to anyone unable to meet this request. (In past years, some members have paid an additional amount to offset the cost for others. That would certainly be acceptable and appreciated.)

Ministry Teams

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

Christian Ed. MT
Rob Lovewell
Daleen Perkins
Ronda Yeomans
christianed@gracechurchucc.

Mission

May Cans for Communion – May 4th

This month we are looking for: CEREAL, PEANUT BUTTER, TUNA, and SOUP. Donations go to MetroWest Harvest Food Pantry in Framingham. Please contact Mary Memmott if you would like to help deliver our collection.

“Socks, Sandwiches, and a Sunday Service”

In the month of May we will again be collecting NEW, men’s, white athletic socks for the Worcester Fellowship, an outdoor church that serves the homeless. You can bring in socks (unopened packages, please) any Sunday until May 18th. On Sunday, May 18th, the Central Council from Grace will deliver our sock collection and attend the Worcester Fellowship outdoor service on Worcester Common. We’ll leave from Grace around noon and bring sandwiches to share for an outdoor lunch and service in Worcester 12:45-2:00 p.m. All are welcome, and we will car-pool. We are also

looking for volunteers to make sandwiches or donate bread and sandwich fixings (PB&J, meat, cheese, lettuce – no mayo), easy-to-eat fruit (bananas, oranges), juice boxes, or cookies. There will be a sign-up sheet at church on May 4th, or contact Mary Memmott for details.

Coming Up – Stearns Farm!

The harvest season is coming soon!

Grace Church will start its second season as a member of Stearns Farm in Framingham. Look for a work-day you can join in June, and the chance to help with produce and flower pick-up at the farm every other Friday from June-October, starting June 20th. This is a family-friendly activity. Half of the produce we collect will be available for members after church on monthly dates to be announced; the other half will go to the MetroWest Harvest Food Pantry. Many hands make light work and the reward is delicious produce -- stay tuned to how you can get involved!



Christian Education

• The Grace faith community extends sincere and enthusiastic thanks to Daleen Perkins, Ronda Yeomans, Jan Norling and anyone else who taught or assisted Christian Education classes in the month of April. Thank you for actively living your faith and helping our children to develop their own. Lessons in April were taken from the “Followers of Jesus” section of Come Join the Circle curriculum. Lessons in May will be taken from the “Paul and the Early Church” section. Thanks in advance to those planning to teach or assist in May including Jean Burr, Lynn Burdett, Ronda Yeomans, Mary Memmott, Linda Hilliard, Daleen Perkins and Rob Lovewell. A Christian Ed classroom lesson will be offered on May 4 (Church World Service School Kits) so that children may be in service with their families on Mother’s Day (May 11). Regular CE classes will resume on May 18 and 25.

• Regarding the nursery, our child care person, Rayna Gamble has decided to spend the warm weather months with her family on Sun AMs and so is no longer available to work at Grace until the late fall. Stacy Tuegal will be occasionally available to cover child care during our search for a new childcare worker, but cannot commit to every week. If anyone has any leads on a potential candidate for the job please contact Ronda Yeomans 508-877-7504.

• The last CE classroom lesson of the year (review plus party) will be June 8 to coincide with the end of the public school academic year in Framingham. Mary Memmott will be planning Camp Grace informal CE lessons for the summer and will let us know which Sundays those will be scheduled. Happy Spring!

Ministry Teams

Deacon MT
Ruth Carney,
Chair
Joanne Larkins
George Tynes
Karolyne White

deacons@
gracechurchucc.

Deacons

People of Grace,
Our May worship will compliment the sessions on Natural Church Development (NCD) that all of you have signed up for. It is an exciting journey to be on – to wish, to dream, to acknowledge who we are and where we are going, to realize our individual spiritual gifts and be able to use them to fulfill the promises of tomorrow! It really is exciting!

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 bookcase that holds the hymnals and Bibles.

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*

Membership 101

We intend to have ongoing conversations around membership in Grace and in the wider United Church of Christ. These sessions are for those who are members of Grace, those who are thinking about joining Grace and those who would just like some more information. It will include the history of Grace, the United Church of Christ and what membership means. We had initially decided to have these sessions on the first Sunday of each month. We are postponing Membership 101 for the time being. The Natural Church Development sessions will begin on May 4 and will continue through the first Sunday in June. We do not want to schedule anything that will conflict with the NCD sessions.

In memory of Lynn Rodriguez

Recently the Colpitts family donated money to remember their daughter, Lynn Rodriguez. Lynn was an integral part of our Grace Church family; she co-lead the Christian Education ministry team, chaired the celebration team when we moved into our new home and provided a voice of deep faith whenever we met. She was taken from us suddenly after a brief illness just over a year ago.

A team was formed to identify how best to honor Lynn and further the mission of Grace with this gift. The money will be spent two ways; a projector that will allow slide, movie and other video presentations and the start of a library to enhance the spiritual formation of all members of the Grace community from child to elder.

Please let us know if there are any books or DVD's that you think should be on our list as we build up the library. And remember Lynn as we explore and deepen our faith together.

Peace and Blessings to you from the team: Jean Burr, Ellie Crawford, Joanne Larkins, Terri Taylor

Duck Soup Event Was Just Ducky!

Everything about the April 26 Duck Soup event worked well . . .

- There were lots of volunteers.
- Donations were bountiful.
- The little rubber ducks were fun to give out - and fun to receive.
- The weather was perfection.
- There were 39 signatures collected to send to Congress regarding Darfur.
- We made close to \$800 - including the raffle, which accounted for more than \$250.
- The ice cream sundaes were yummy.
- The bake table was amazing - plus we got lots of free baked goods from BJs.
- Free balloons from Friendly's drew the eye.
- The smell of popcorn was mouth watering.
- The May Baskets sold out early in the day - with one person spending \$65. The baskets (separate income from the entire event) totaled about \$143.
- The Big Green Ambulance was very big and very green.
- The children were adorable decorating ducks!
- It was a great time!

Thanks to all of you who supported Duck Soup by

- donating items to the yard sale, bake table and plant table
- went into community to promote the activity
- worked to sort, set up, sell and clean up
- supported the event with your presence and money

Faith In Action

The Faith in Action team will be meeting on May 13 at 7:30. Agenda items will include a welcome gift for visitors, a summer fellowship activity, and suggestions for fall activities. All who are interested are invited to come and all ideas and comments are welcome.

Thanks to donors

Please give your thanks to the following businesses who supported us with donations:

- Auto Bright
- BJ's Warehouse
- Bella Costa Restaurant
- Breyer's Ice Cream
- Bugaboo Creek Restaurant
- Centre for Arts in Natick
- Dynasty Chinese Restaurant
- Flooky and the Beans
- Friendly's Restaurant
- Framingham Cooperative Bank
- Ken's Steak House
- Joe's All American Grille
- Mad Willie's Ice Cream
- Members of Grace Church
- Riversedge Nursery
- Silhouette Factory
- Whole Foods



Grace Congregational Church, UCC

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