

Grace is a Green Church!

GRACE NOTES

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

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Future Retreat Update

Grace Church gathered over the weekend of April 11 and 12 to get the work done. What work is that you say? Why the work of “setting the trajectory for many key decisions in the church in 2014 and beyond, including ministries, staffing, and building.”

Leading us in this effort was the excellent Matt Rosine from the Hope Partnership for Mission Transformation. The workshop format, the conversations we held with each other, the locations at 76 Salem End Road and at 1 Badger Road, all these were familiar to most of us. After all, we rely for much of our current vitality on our trust in each other, our willingness to trust those who join us (thus becoming part of “us”), and our habit of

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*Please mark your calendar to attend a
Congregational Conversation on May 18th
following the service.*

Mark Your Calendars: Saturday, May 31st



The Not Ready for Anytime Players' The Case of the Mysterious Benefactor

Community Room, Framingham Green, Maynard Street

Hors D'Oeuvres: 6:00 • Dinner and Show: 6:30 PM
Dinner will be a free will offering

Directed by Daleen Perkins. The Players: Carl Buck, Jean Burr,
Amelia Burton, George Burton, Frank Carney, Ruth Carney,
Brad Watters, Eleanor Yeomans

Dinner crew: Beverly Ablondi, Lynn Burdett, Linda Hilliard,
Evie McGuirk, Katie Michaud, Judy Sebastian

*There will be a dinner reservation sheet in the Fellowship Hall
To join the cast: Jean Burr. To help with dinner: Linda Hilliard*

Dear Ones,

The story of Jonah is another Bible favorite! The reluctant prophet, the ship's crew in fear for their lives, a tempest, "man overboard!" a great fish, the prophet acquiesces, a land journey, a wicked city with a wicked ruler, a prophetic voice, a repentance and mending of ways, a temper tantrum, and a prank by the creator of the universe. Maybe you remember it as Jonah and the Whale. It's an epic tale and lends itself to child's drawings, costume dramas, puppet plays, and stained glass windows.

Which part of that story is about you? Is any part of that story like you or like part of your life?

Let me suggest a few places where you might see moments of your own journey in the journey of Jonah.

Have you felt compelled to take on an onerous or dangerous task? God compelled Jonah to go to Nineveh and tell them to shape up. Jonah really didn't want anything to do with such a fool's errand. The embarrassment would be huge. He clearly would have no effect on the wicked. His reputation as a prophet would go down the drain. It was a long and difficult journey. They might just throw him in jail, or worse. Jesus, faced with this kind of task, asked to be let off, although if that was not possible, he said he would complete his destiny. Jonah just got out of town.

How about this one? You might have realized that you were the one messing things up. Or you violated your rela-

tionship with someone; being too controlling, being unkind, losing your temper in a hurtful way, grabbing a moment of selfishness. Jonah knew that he was the one who was the cause of the tempest. He comes to a dramatic moment of truth, don't you think?

"He said to them, 'Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you; for I know it is because of me that this great storm has come upon you.'"

Have you ever given Jonah credit for this moment in the story? He will sacrifice himself for a bunch of strangers, people he just met. It is extraordinary! And then something else extraordinary happens. They refuse!

"Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to bring the ship back to land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more stormy against them."

So, over he goes. Can you relate? Have you ever cast your fate upon the uncertain or dangerous path in a way from which there is no turning back? Or perhaps you can relate to what must have happened after he hit the water. Jonah knew he was finished. Nothing is stronger than an angry sea and he was right in the middle of it and beginning to sink. There are images stuck in my head from the end of the movie, *A Perfect Storm*. One is Bobby Shatford, played by Mark Wahlberg, who is overboard and floating. He is completely alone in the vastness. Another is Billy Tyne,

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Saturday, May 3

8:00 AM Men's Breakfast

Sunday, May 4

(Walk For Hunger)

(No Cans for Communion)

9:00 AM Singers rehearse

10:00 AM Worship

Sunday, May 11

(Mother's Day "Crazy Hat" contest)

9:00 AM Singers rehearse

10:00 AM Worship

Wednesday, May 14

11:30 AM GWU meeting

7:00PM Green Movie at

Plymouth

Wednesday, May 16

2:00 PM Service at Carlylse House

Sunday, May 18

9:00 AM Singers rehearse

10:00 AM Worship

11:30 AM Congregational
Conversation

Sunday, May 25

9:00 AM Singers rehearse

10:00 AM Worship

Wednesday, May 28

10:00 AM Book Club

Saturday, May 31st

5:30 PM Not Ready for Anytime
Players Production



PROJECT BREAD'S
**WALK
FOR HUNGER**
MAY 4, 2014

Walk for Hunger Sunday, May 4

Checks may be made out to "Project Bread" and any walker can take your check (Frank Carney, Mary Memmott, Ellen or Amelia Burton, Ronda or Eleanor Yeomans, Meghan Taylor, Andrea Buck).

You can sign up to walk or make an online pledge at: <http://support.projectbread.org/goto/gracechurch>.

Retreat Report

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listening to and speaking with each other with respect and interest. So we were well prepared for this crucial moment in the long history of Grace Congregational United Church of Christ. Call it "Mission Redefinition 2014!"

So what actually happened? Well, we will be convening a congregational meeting on Sunday, May 18, following worship that will include, among other things, a context-setting presentation, and that will include events from the April 11 & 12 retreat. So if you want to know what happened, that's the date to mark on your calendar. Still, here are some scoops.

You'll remember that part of the retreat included folks from the wider community, wider than those who worship at 10:00 AM Sundays at Grace Church. It was really fun having "new" faces, as it always is, and to be able to welcome them as graciously as we did.

We spent time together hav-

ing a World Café conversation. You may remember that we held World Café conversations a few years ago at Grace. This is where we all discuss a topic but we separate into conversation groups around a bunch of tables. Sheets of paper on the tables provide a surface on which participants write interesting responses to the topic. Then, every 15 minutes or so, most people get up and switch tables! It's like musical chairs but in our version, there's always a seat for everyone. The process gives lots of different voices "the floor" and the responses build on each other and take surprising turns.

And the topic? "What needs, visible and invisible, do we hear the people of our community facing?" You should see the sheets of paper from those table conversations! Actually, you can see them. We will post them just so you can see the ferment of ideas.

Then Matt led us to consider "What issue, if we could address it, would have the greatest impact for good in our community?" The different tables came up with, "The intolerance divide," "Make stronger, intentional, authentic connections within the community," "Make everyone welcome everywhere," "Authentic connections among diverse people."

There was much more to the retreat so that was just a taste to pique the interest of any of you who couldn't attend. There are also three immediate follow-on tasks. One task is to convene

Pastor's column

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played by George Clooney, who is still in his boat, underwater, staring up as all is lost. Have you been there beloved? Have you been in a place where there is no more help coming, no hope at all?

Then maybe you have found what Jonah found. Even in the most devastating, hopeless chaos, something comes swimming as if it owned the place. The great fish swims to the rescue and Jonah is saved. God's child, leviathan, whale, giant beast of the sea, water angel, comes and saves the drowning prophet.

When you are in the place of chaos and pain, may there be the very hand of God to hold you and see you through.
Peace and Blessing,

Pastor Brad

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FIA, Green Team, Foam and Earth Day Festival



FIA and Green Team

Faith in Action met briefly on April 6th in order to make final plans for the upcoming Earth Day Festival on April 26th. The Grace Church banner, which the Green Team had agreed to have Frank order, had arrived and we all deemed it perfect for the table at the Festival. If you didn't get there, you can see it in the fellowship area at the church, as well as the "solar" poster, also a Green Team project.

A brief discussion ensued about the upcoming performance of the Not Ready for Anytime Players and, although originally scheduled for May 17th, the date has been set for May 31st. Please see the information on page one - and put the date on your calendar. Not to be missed! (*Editor's note: This will be a superb - and fun - show with a delicious dinner.*)

Foam and Earth Day

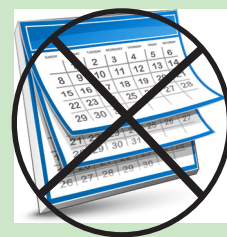
Our April foam collection took place on a cold, wet day. Amazingly, that didn't seem to discourage the public from coming to help us fill two of ReFoamIt's trailers! Thanks to a wonderful group of volunteers from Grace and the charter school, we were able to go inside to get warm as needed. It's always a surprise and very rewarding to hear from the public how grateful folks are that Grace Church is providing a way to recycle foam. This particular collection was a major part of Framingham's Earth Day celebration. Our next date is July 26 from 10 to 2:00, a new closing time!

As the Foam Collection was taking place at the church, several other church folks worked at the Earth Day Festival: Ronda and Eleanor Yeomans, Katie Michaud, Barbara Sherman, Linda Hilliard and Amelia and Ellen Burton staffed two tables at the event (which was moved indoors to the high school because of the rain). As with the church event, there were many kind comments about the "good work" that Grace is doing on behalf of the environment. The church has an excellent reputation in the community as a green church.

Jean Burr and Linda Hilliard



On one rare, warm, sunny day recently, I was sitting on the shore, loving the feel of spring, when a human walked by fussing about something with a man friend. Not being one to ignore a chance to eavesdrop, I tuned in to listen. It seems as though one of them had just received a 2015 full sized calendar in the mail along with a solicitation for money to help save the earth. As if that wasn't bad enough, the whole thing came from EarthJustice!!



The discussion went on to reveal that this organization has accomplished many good things and holds claim to be a four star charity, so they both agreed that this is admirable. However, the problem they were debating was, how many calendars were sent out and how many trees had to be cut down in order to make them? The man had received nearly 20 calendars last year from different organizations and most of them ended up in the recycling bin. He couldn't even give them away because most everyone else had a bunch as well!

As I hopped along behind the couple, straining to hear what they were going to do about this, I was happy to hear that they are both going to contact (hopefully electronically) any organization that sends Anything in the way of "gifts" (labels, greeting cards, wrapping paper, note pads, etc.) to them and ask just one question: HOW MANY TREES? Gee, I wish I had a computer!

As told to Jean Burr by Kermit

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 florist (\$43 or higher or lower) 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 have funds donated for this purpose.

Helping Adults and Children Survive

Submitted by Ronda Yeomans

Many in the Grace congregation are concerned about adults and children surviving without homes and crucial living supplies. While this is a worldwide, seemingly timeless, problem, some of us feel pulled to try to address it locally. Andrea Buck and I had a very eye opening overnight visit to the Common Cathedral of Ecclesia Ministries at St. Paul's Episcopal in downtown Boston last fall. We learned much from our formerly homeless hosts, and worked with volunteers from around the region to meet some of the immediate needs of the congregants for a few hours. We came away with an even deeper longing to somehow lessen the suffering of those caught in this nightmarish situation.

Members of Grace travel once a year or more to the Worcester Fellowship to participate in outdoor worship services and help distribute food and clothing to those in need. While I find these visits to be "outside my comfort zone," they are also a vivid reminder of how hard everyday life is for so many, and why it is so important for me to continue to try to address this issue.

It is hard not to feel paralyzed by despair regarding this complex, multi-determined, and apparently insoluble problem. What can I possibly

What can I possibly do as an individual to help? What can our congregation possibly do? ... I also genuinely believe that doing something, no matter how small, is better than doing nothing.

do as an individual to help? What can our congregation possibly do? Conversations with friends and research leads me to believe that many in our society would like to do something to help but don't know where to start or what to do. We are so in the habit of perceiving our experience as solitary, it's hard to remember we are not alone. I pray God will grow my faith, my insight, and my memory so that I can more deeply believe God will support us in doing his good works. I also genuinely believe that doing something, no matter how

small, is better than doing nothing. Of course I am happy to embrace any brilliant solutions which fall into my lap as well.

The plarning project

Two and a half years ago, Linda Dunbrack posted a photo online of church ladies down south who were cutting up used plastic bags and crocheting them into mats for the homeless. I thought this was a brilliant idea because it helped to keep plastic out of the waste cycle while simultaneously providing free raw materials to create needed sleeping mats for those "living rough." I was inspired to take this project on and try to make it happen locally.

.... Grace Church could help in many ways ...we could donate time, money, toiletries, diapers and other supplies, expertise (ESL classes), homework support or just rides around the community.

As usual when I am swept up in a new idea, I jumped into the project with two feet. My daughter and I researched the process on line and I learned how to crochet. I enthusiastically tried to get folks at church and in the community interested in creating these mats. I tried to promote the project at community events. I brought my "plarning" to the middle school after school knitting club, and presented the idea at various churches, schools, and individual homes around town. After exerting a huge amount of energy, I learned that many people want to help do something to help people currently without homes. I can get folks to take part temporarily, but it is very difficult to get people to make an ongoing commitment to a project which takes so long to complete. I had folks willing to cut plastic bags, tie them together and roll them into balls, but I definitely didn't have enough people willing to crochet them into mats. Creating a mat was too long and slow a process without sufficient reward to keep folks at it. All told only about four mats were created over

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Mother and Child

"I love you," said a great mother.

"I love you for what you are, knowing so well what you are. And I love you more yet, child, deeper yet than ever, child, for what you are going to be, knowing so well you are going far, knowing your great works are ahead, ahead and beyond, yonder and far."

—Carl Sandburg

Women of Valor

In A Year of Biblical Womanhood (Thomas Nelson), Rachel Held Evans explores the concept of the Proverbs 31 woman, whose character is described as noble or virtuous. Many scholars say the most accurate translation of the Hebrew phrase eshet chayil is actually the "valorous woman." To many modern-day women, Proverbs 31 seems like an impossible-to-meet job description. But Evans says that shouldn't be the case. "The woman of Proverbs 31 is not some ideal that exists out there; she is present in each one of us when we do even the smallest things with valor," she writes. "Like any good poem, the purpose of this one is to draw attention to the often-overlooked glory of the everyday." To affirm the females in her life, Evans started calling them "women of valor." What an honoring way to bless someone's day!

People of Grace
(and women of valor),

Well, spring has sprung - at least some of the days. In my yard, only the forsythias have bloomed. Still waiting on the tulips and daffodils. What's outside your door?

We had a wonderful Easter service on April 20th. We had so many guests and visitors that there was hardly an empty seat in the room. A couple of them were in town to run the Boston Marathon on the following Monday and chose to worship with us.

The Walk for Hunger will be on May 4th and many from our congregation will be walking. Have you sponsored anyone yet? There is still time. Our Pastor Brad will be one of the walkers and we will have a lay-led service on the 4th. Terri Taylor has graciously agreed to put the service together and she and I will be worship leaders.

May 11th is Mother's Day. Do you remember a couple of years ago we had an "Ugly Tie Contest" on Father's Day? Well, we never did anything on Mother's Day - until this year. We will have a "Crazy Hat" contest on Mother's Day! So, ladies dig around in your closets and bring out your best chapeau or craziest. And since females participated in the Ugly Tie Contest (and one won), this hat contest is open to the males in our midst. If you don't have a hat, please create something - the

sky's the limit! For those of you who would rather not mess up your hair with a hat, you will be the judges for the contest. So, whether you have your dome covered or not, you will have a task on the 11th.

I wish all mothers and those who have taken on the role of mother a Wonderful and Happy Mother's Day!

And for those graduating this May and June these words from Tom Brokaw: "You are educated. Your certification is in your degree. You may think of it as the ticket to the good life. Let me ask you to think of an alternative. Think of it as your ticket to change the world."

Please do not forget that our church cares about your wellbeing, if the church 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! Now that spring is here, our prayers are that you find time to replenish yourself - mind, body and soul - and join us at church!

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

Helping Adults and Children Survive

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the course of two years, but I still have lots of rolled balls of plarn. Once crocheted, the mats were heavy and took up about the space of an entire large knapsack, which is usually all most folks without housing have room to carry. The other problem pointed out to me, was that there was no guarantee that the completed mats would not end up in the trash stream anyway, once folks no longer wanted or needed them.

Family Promise in Natick

Family Services Coalition in Framingham

I am relieved and happy to learn of and start to connect with both Family Promise in Natick and Family Services Coalition in Framingham (both serve both towns). It's such a relief to join up with a huge network of volunteers who have the same goals as I do. Ruth Carney and I interviewed Lauren Fawell and Eva Benda of Framingham Services Coalition for the Future of the Church Retreat. I was trying to get a sense for what they needed from us and it sounds like Grace Church could help in many ways. For example we could donate time, money, toiletries, diapers and other supplies, expertise (ESL classes), homework support or just rides around the community. Both Brad and I are already signed up as drivers. It's just a matter of thinking about how we want to participate.

The Family Promise organization works with churches, like the Federated Church of Ashland, to provide temporary shelter and meals. We could support the Ashland Church or other churches with meals and in other ways. Our commitments can be as big or as small as we want them to be, but I need to find out from the Grace Community what is it that we want to do if anything. Who wants to be involved to help, how and how often.

I feel called to participate in this work. I would like to explore with you Grace Church folk if you feel called as well. Please contact me, Ronda Yeomans, and let's see if together we can find good ways to help, right here in our community where help is needed.

Grace Women United

Grace Women United will meet on Wednesday, May 14th at 11:30 AM. Bring lunch; dessert provided.

Book Club

Book Club will meet Wednesday, May 28th at 10AM in the library. The book for the month is Jodi Picoult's *The Story Teller*. Lynn Burdett



Mission

Next up in the spring "green" movie series

More Than Honey

Wednesday, May 14th,
7pm

Plymouth Church
87 Edgell Road
Framingham, MA

"If bees were to disappear from the globe, mankind would only have four years left to live." - Albert Einstein

An extraordinary film about the diminishing bee population and its impact on our future

Film runs 99 minutes; followed by discussion and input from local beekeepers

Storm Closings

Even though winter is over, storms still happen and soon we will be in the hurricane season.

If we need to cancel a service or activity, tune to WCVB-TV channel 5 for our listing. We will also use other sources (i.e.: email, Facebook, etc) to get the word out. If there is a power failure and you cannot access TV or internet, call Ruth Carney at home.

Retreat Report

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the all-church meeting on May 18, a key step in communicating “the mission,” i.e., how we might address the aforementioned key issue/need in our community .

Another task is to write a Future Story of Grace Church. We encountered the idea of a “Future Story” in the New Beginnings Assessment document we received a year ago. Imagine someone like The Globe Magazine is writing about Framingham five years from now. The article describes what has been happening at and as the result of the efforts of Grace Church in the town. A writing team, Linda Dunbrack, Terri Taylor, and (I) Brad Watters are working on that story now. We will all get our hands on it on or before May 18!

The other task is the 21-day Challenge. This challenges us to complete a tangible, visible project that gets us started on the redefined mission within 21 days. We started that cal-

endar on Monday, April 26 with the goal of finishing early, you guessed it, by May 18. That project is to build and plant a raised garden, “raised” in this case meaning raised to table height. The idea is to make a garden bed accessible to all, including those for whom a ground-level garden is not reasonably accessible.

Want to help? Be sure to tell someone on the Leadership Min-

istry Team, “Hey, I’d like to help with the plants!” or “Can I help with building the garden?”

You might be asking how an accessible, raised garden is part of a new mission for Grace Church. What a great question! Come on May 18 and it will all come together. Also, for those two dozen of you who were at the retreat, share your memory with someone who wasn’t. That ought to work really well!

Deacon’s Fund

The “Deacon’s Fund” is a budget item that is replenished by the church family either by special offerings during worship and by specific donations. This fund’s purpose is helping those in a particular need or in an emergency. Money collected feed the pastor’s discretionary account so Pastor Brad will have the means to help individuals within and outside our congregation.

The use of these money is confidential. Please prayerfully consider donating to this fund. It could help the person sitting next to you, across from you or even yourself at some point. Remember, God loves a joyful giver and gifts of all sizes will be put to good use. Thank you!

Message from the Central Association

Central Association Board of Directors is seeking nominations for three general members. There are two two-year terms and a one-year term to be filled.

The Board oversees the Association, hearing reports of the Area Conference Minister, the Committee on Ministry, and Worcester Area Mission Society. We propose a budget to be voted on at Annual Meeting; put together a slate of candidates for Committee on Ministry and the Board; plan and carry out the Annual Meeting; and participate in Ecclesiastical Councils, Ordinations, Installations and retirement services. We seek a balance between lay members and ordained, with at least one third of each body having lay representation. We meet the 3rd Thursday from 2:30 to 4, Sept-Nov and Feb-June.

Questions and nominations can be directed to Rev. Doreen Oughton at dcomdiv@yahoo.com or 978-846-6498. Thank you for your consideration.

If you receive your Grace Notes by Mail

Thanks to the several readers who have volunteered to receive their Grace Notes issue electronically (thus saving the church money on paper and postage). Of course we’re happy to mail you a copy, but if you have an e-mail address that we could use instead, please send it to lmhilliard@aol.com so she can switch you over.

Also, if you would prefer not to received *Grace Notes* at all, please let us know. Thanks