

Grace is a Green Church!

GRACE NOTES

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

Volume 17
Number 5
May 2015

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Save the Dates

May 4th: Discussion on Staffing Needs

On Monday May 4th at 7:30 pm, the Leadership Team will be hosting our second discussion in a series about planning the future staffing needs of the church. These discussions will help with planning for larger congregational discussions. All are invited and welcome to attend and contribute their thoughts and ideas.

May 16th: Help Build Raised Garden Beds for Youth

Grace Church is hosting a “building party” for raised garden beds for youth programs at Pelham Apartments. It has tentatively been scheduled for Sat. May 16. The date may be moved back in May, as we are waiting for the results of soil testing, which would impact the design of the bed. (Grace Church paid for and facilitated the soil testing.)

May 17th: Bridging Gaps: Growing the Beloved Community

Plan to stay after church on May 17th for a one hour introduction to a program we will be offering as part of our hope to grow our cultural proficiency. One place to begin to equip ourselves to bridge gaps in Framingham is to engage in “a blameless critique” of the ways that racism lingers in us, persists in our history and practices, and creates a “headwind” that resists our determined efforts to move beyond tolerance toward celebration and acceptance of each other. The 1 hour introduction will include an exercise typical of the kinds of activities that make up the class sessions of the program. We will also learn the scope and goals of this program. For more information, contact Pastor Brad.

May 31st: Congregational Conversation

On Sunday, May 31st, the Leadership Team will be holding a Congregational Conversation after worship. The conversation will focus on the ongoing efforts to move forward with our Future Story and discussions of all of the ways, large and small, that people can be a part of the process.

June 14th: Congregational Meeting

Grace’s congregational meeting will be held on June 14th after church.

Dear Ones,

They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

- Genesis 3:8

You know this story, I think. The excerpt above comes from one of the Bible's great creation stories. The moment comes just after the first kids have munched some fruit they were supposed to leave alone. It comes when they have, and not for the last time, begun to see how what we decide, and say, and do in life has consequences foreseen and unforeseen. The story is rich with angles and deep with themes, open as a source of wonder and powerful in its history.

For starters, I can still taste the rough joy of some Easter Peeps® I sneaked from a pre-Easter stash over half a century ago; I still feel myself sobbing as I choke them down. I imagine that's similar to how those two humans remembered parts of their story in their later years. It is so easy for us to put ourselves into this story! This is one of the characteristics of stories that are also powerful and enduring myths. We either have experiences that directly relate (apple:peep) or we have emotional resonance with the emotional reality of the myth (guilty-pleasure, remorse, worry about consequences, fear,) Because it is so easy for us to engage the story for how it is or

is not about us, we miss the rest of the story.

It was evening and a breeze was blowing through the Garden of Eden - through creation. Listen, in that lovely transition time the sounds of the birds of daytime are muted. Hear the leaves and branches softly whispering. If you were listening closely, you would have heard another sound as well. It was the Lord God walking in the garden. Would you try, right now, to imagine that? This is a prayer practice, a religious meditation technique. Put yourself there on an evening in, let's say, July. The warmth of the day lingers but the rising coolness of the night makes it delightful. Some stars have appeared, perhaps, or maybe the sun - not yet set - has altered the color of things. It's your meditation so you choose what the surroundings look like. Leave behind your burdens of sorrow, of regret, all tight and weighty things and look around your imagined Eden. You belong

here. You are loved here. Rest in that place for a moment.

I'll wait.

Now sharpen your hearing just a bit and see if you can hear the Lord God walking nearby. Just listen and breathe as long as you can in that place. As you fade out of that garden, I hope you can keep some of the good energy that flows there. I hope you will go back and visit that place again.

Here's a key point, beloved. One terrific way to use the stories and other contents of the Bible is to read with an eye that looks for what God is doing in the text. What is "God up to here?" you can ask. You can ask that, if you wish, because you believe that the Bible is, "fully inspired by God and without error." And if that is not your understanding, you can still ask the question.

I suggest that whatever you hold to be true about the na-

Continued one page five

They Want a Tiny House?

Grace has been approached by a young couple, Seth and Christine, who plan to build a tiny house on wheels. They plan to travel using the tiny house as a house trailer to farms around the U.S.A. to learn about organic farming so they can become farmers of their own place someday. They need a place to build the tiny house.

- What would it be like for them to build their house in our large field?
- How does this project fit with our Future Story?
- What challenges does such a project pose?
- What opportunities does such a project open?

Seth and Christine have written a proposal which is now available at church. We are arranging a conversation for Seth and Christine, for you Grace Church folk, and for our neighbors in the next few weeks to explore this possibility. Stay tuned!

Grace Church Walkers Help Homeless

A team of walkers from Grace UCC joined hundreds walking 3.1 miles in the 6th Annual “Walk Away Homelessness” event on Saturday, April 11.

Andrea Buck, Ellen Burton, Ivan Ray, Eleanor Yeomans and Ronda Yeomans made up Team Grace at this event. Grace Church contributed over \$200 to the fundraiser. Over \$104,000 in donations were raised overall. The walk is the major annual fundraiser for Family Promise Metrowest’s Family Shelter and Transitional Housing Program. The agency provides temporary shelter, job placement, tutoring, health service, life skills counseling, clothing, advocacy, transportation, and transitional housing for families in need throughout in the entire Metrowest area. Sincere thanks to all those who supported this effort.

The next Team Grace walking event will be the Walk for Hunger on Sunday May 3. Our team leader is Mary Memmott. Go to projectbread.org for more information or to sponsor our team. Thank you!

Let Justice Roll: Pay 2 Play

A Film and Discussion about Democracy, Money and Social Justice Advocacy

Social justice advocacy is about taking political action to promote equality or equal opportunity in society, but, powerful special interests have undermined the democratic process and many social justice efforts. What can we do?

Grace will host a community screening of “Pay 2 Play,” an award-winning documentary about inequities and the role of money within our democracy. The event will take place on Sunday May 17 from 3-5:30 pm, at Plymouth Church, which is handicapped accessible. The event is free, but donations to defray the cost of the screening will be gratefully accepted. Members of the public are encouraged to attend.

John Wellington Ennis’s “Pay 2 Play” is a provocative, powerful, insightful documentary that probes the quid pro quo relationship between government and major political donors, particularly lobbyists, corporations, and political action committees (PACs). What Ennis discovers is that the return on donations is substantial, coming in the form of government handouts, reduced taxes, deregulation, access, and policy influence.

After the film, participants will have the opportunity to discuss the film and its implications on social justice advocacy with one another.



Mission



Cans for Communion on Hold

Please Give to Walk for Hunger

We won't collect cans this month, but you can donate to Project Bread -- the Walk for Hunger. These funds are essential for food pantries and anti-hunger programs throughout the Boston area, including the Hope pantry where we bring cans. You can donate online at www.support.projectbread.org.

Click on the Support a Team icon and type in Grace Church - or make out a check to “Project Bread” and leave it in the collection.

Our Grace walkers can also take cash donations -- Mary Memmott, Amelia Burton, Katie Michaud, Frank Carney, or Ronda Yeomans.

The Walk for Hunger is Sunday, May 3rd. The walkers won't be at church that Sunday, but late donations are always welcome.

Mary Memmott

Foam Collection

Grace's April 25th Foam Collection was a huge success filling two trailers (75 cubic feet of foam). As always, the volunteer team was stellar (albeit a bit weary by the end). As in the past, two Charter School students helped along with one amazing mother who skillfully packed the trailer. Thanks all!



Tiny Beads are a Big Problem

Do you realize that your face wash, toothpaste, and hand lotion might contain tiny pieces of plastic called "microbeads"? Take a good look at the labels on your bathroom shelf or cabinet -- if you see polyethylene (sometimes labeled "PE") there is a good chance the product contains microbeads.

These beads can be less than a millimeter thick (hard to see with the naked eye), but are added to products as exfoliating or cleansing agents. The problem with microbeads is that they do not decay and are not trapped by wastewater treatment. Instead, they head down the drain and into our waterways, where they become part of the food web. The beads become part of the great amount of plastic pollution in the water and are easily ingested by marine life. They can cause damage to the fish, and tend to accumulate other pollutants as they float in the wa-

ter, which only intensifies their bad effects. They have become such a problem for the Great Lakes that Illinois became the first state to ban microbeads in beauty products this year. Other states are expected to follow, and many cosmetic companies are starting to respond to pressure to remove these materials from their products.

In the meantime, check those labels. If you find a product with microbeads, you might want to do the fish a favor and throw it away (with the cap tightly sealed). For more information you can check out this article from the Sierra Club -- <http://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/2014-4-july-august/green-life/how-handle-microbeads>, or go to the website www.beaththemicrobead.org to download an app you can use to check products before you buy them.

Special thanks to my students, Kaylee H and Hannah S., for their excellent science fair project on microbeads that alerted me to this problem!

Mary Memmott

FIA/ Green Team Meeting held April 12

A joint meeting was held following worship on Sunday, April 12.

- It was agreed that approximately \$70 will be taken from the FIA budget to defray the cost for the much needed FACES ID buttons. (FACES stands for Framingham Coalition for Environmental Safety). Mary Memmott will coordinate this.
- Items which were discussed included:

Green Team and Faith in Action will have a joint meeting after church one Sunday in May (Date TBA)

- The possibility of becoming involved in an after school gardening program at the Pelham Apartment complex
- Grace's ability to complete Level III of the Green Church Challenge
- Plans for the April foam collection.
- Note: The Organizing Session was canceled due to the speaker moving out of the area.

Jean Burr and Frank Carney

GWU

Grace Women United will meet Thursday, May 14th, at 11:30 AM

Lynn Burdett

Book Club



Book Club will meet on Wednesday, May 27th, at 10AM. Book to be announced.

Lynn Burdett

**No Cans for Communion in May
Please Give to Walk for Hunger**

Altar Flowers

If you would like to provide flowers for the altar, please contact Ruth Carney. She can order them from our florist (\$43 or higher/lower) or you may bring flowers. If there is a special event in the life of Grace that you would like lifted up and acknowledged with flowers, let Ruth know and she will arrange it. (We do have funds donated for this purpose.)

Pastor's column *Continued from page two*

ture of the Bible, you can use it as a practice text for how to live in God's kingdom, as it is now and will be forever, world without end. As we think about events in our own lives, decisions we make, words we say, and things we do, we can ask the question, "What is God up to here?" It may seem an absurd question to ask and very likely does not come naturally to you. The gift to you, then, is that the Bible is where you practice seeing what God is up to in the stories and poems, the histories and letters. You can develop your sensitivity to God's intentions, God's actions by entering into these words - written by people just like you trying to figure out all kinds of things about life and trying at the same time to figure out what God is up to. Pray with me now.

Dear God, We thank you for the ways in which we have heard you speaking in texts from near and far. We particularly thank you for the stories and other words we have from those who wrote the Bible, trying to be faithful to their experience of you in the midst of their particular place and time. We further thank you for our own gifts for thinking and imagining our life with you. Speak with us today as you have always sought to do. And let us hear your step in the garden of our own making, in the gardens of our hearts. Amen.

Peace and Blessing,
Pastor Brad

Church Ladies With Typewriters

They're Back! Those wonderful Church Bulletins! These sentences actually appeared in church bulletins or were announced at services:

- The Fasting & Prayer Conference includes meals.
- Scouts are saving aluminum cans, bottles and other items to be recycled. Proceeds will be used to cripple children.
- The sermon this morning: 'Jesus Walks on the Water.' The sermon tonight: 'Searching for Jesus.'
- Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Bring your husbands.
- For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.
- Next Thursday there will be try-outs for the choir. They need all the help they can get.
- Irving Benson and Jessie Carter were married on October 24 in the church. So ends a friendship that began in their school days.
- At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be 'What Is Hell?' Come early and listen to our choir practice.
- Eight new choir robes are currently needed due to the addition of several new members and to the deterioration of some older ones.
- Pot-luck supper Sunday at 5:00 PM; prayer and medication to follow.
- The ladies of the Church have cast off clothing of every kind. They may be seen in the basement on Friday afternoon.

May Calendar

Saturday, May 2

8:00 AM Men's Group

Sunday, May 3

Walk for Hunger

9:00 AM Singers rehearse
10:00 AM Worship
Dirkje Legerstee
Preaching

Monday, May 4

7:30 PM Staffing Needs
Conversation

Sunday, May 10

Mother's Day

9:00 AM Singers rehearse
10:00 AM Worship

Monday, May 11

7:30 PM Women's Lectio

Thursday, May 14

11:30 AM Grace Women
United

Saturday, May 16

Pelham Garden Project (TBD)

Sunday, May 17

9:00 AM Singers rehearse
10:00 AM Worship
3:00 PM Pay 2 Play film at
Plymouth

Wednesday, May 20th

2:00 PM Carlyle House
7:30 PM Stewards

Sunday, May 24

Pentecost Sunday (wear red)

9:00 AM Singers rehearse
10:00 AM Worship

Monday, May 25

7:30 PM Leadership

Wednesday, May 27

10:00 AM Book Club

Sunday, May 31

9:00 AM Singers rehearse
10:00 AM Worship
Guest preacher
Reverend Kelly
Gallagher
11:30 AM Congregational
Conversation

June 14th Congregation Meeting

Deacons

The wonderful places to be in the world are:

*In someone's thoughts,
In someone's prayers,
And in someone's heart.*

- TruthFollower.com

Two stories that could have happened in my home - how about yours?

First story: The three young children told their mother that she wasn't to lift a finger on Mother's Day. They were going to do all the cooking. So, they got out three pots, two frying pans, six measuring spoons, three mixing bowls, a double boiler, a chopping board and eight serving dishes. Mom said it was the best Jell-O she had ever tasted!

Second story: Two children ordered their mother to stay in bed one Mother's Day morning. As she lay there looking forward to being brought breakfast in bed, the smell of bacon floated up from the kitchen. Finally, the children called her to come downstairs. She found them both sitting at the table eating bacon and eggs.

"As a surprise for Mother's Day," one explained, "we decided to cook our own breakfast."

People of Grace,
Spring is definitely in the air - trees are budding (and pollinating), bushes are getting ready to bloom and I'm sneezing. How about you?

And - Mother's Day will soon be upon us. Happy Mother's Day to all Mothers and to All who have taken on the role of mother! Have a wonderful day!

May Sunday Schedule:

May 3 - A guest preacher, the Reverend Dr. Dirkje Legerstee. Also the Walk to Prevent Hunger in Boston; please sponsor one of our walkers.

May 10 - Pastor Brad leading worship. This is Mother's Day - shall we have another "Crazy Hat Contest?"

May 17 - Pastor Brad leading worship.

May 24 - Pentecost Sunday - wear something red to church to celebrate the birthday of the Christian Church.

May 31 - A guest preacher leading worship with Pastor Brad. The Reverend Kelly Gallagher, who is our Central Association Area Minister, will be with us.

Pastor Brad and Debbie are back from their trip to Utah. Although Pastor Brad is back in town, he will be away May 3rd for a family wedding - he will be officiating at the wedding of his nephew.

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 and please keep our congregation in your prayers.

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

*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

Did you know how Mother's Day came about?



Anna M. Jarvis (1864-1948) loved her mother dearly. It was Miss Jarvis who first suggested a national day to honor all mothers. At a memorial service for her mother on May 10, 1908, Anna gave a carnation, her mother's favorite flower, to each person in attendance. Within a few years, the idea to honor mothers gained popularity, and Mother's Day was soon observed annually in many large cities of the United States.

On May 9, 1914, by an act of congress, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed the second Sunday of May as Mother's Day. He established the day as a time for "public expression of our love and reverence for the mothers of our country." By then, it had become customary to wear white carnations in honor of departed mothers and red carnations to honor the living. The custom continues to this day.

In fact, many carnation colors have special meanings. Pink carries the richest Christian symbolism. According to legend, carnations first appeared on earth as Mary wept while watching Jesus carry his cross. Where her tears fell, there appeared pink carnations, symbolizing a mother's undying love.

According to one theory, the English word for carnation comes from *carnis*, Latin for flesh. From the same root comes *incarnation*, God's coming to earth in flesh. Thus, carnations remind us of our loving mothers as well as our loving Savior.

Ruth Carney