

Grace is a Green Church!

GRACE NOTES

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

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Next in Ministry?

When, at Grace Church, we make our offering of financial gifts, we also ask, "How shall we next be in ministry?" In light of our 2014 Mission, that question invites us to make plans further than the next week.

2014 Mission

The community's deepest need is for authentic, positive connections among people of diverse cultural and economic backgrounds, and Grace's new mission would be responding to this need.

We are now ready to plan how we respond. We have the Future Story as a starting vision of how to respond to "the community's deepest need." We have our experience with the first elevated garden bed to draw on. Through the summer months, some of us have made connections and seen gardens and had additional ideas. It's time to figure out what to do as a church! Planning includes setting goals and desired outcomes, naming and finding resources, scheduling the phases or steps, celebrating and telling the story and, most of all, individual and group efforts to get it done. At a meeting on September 11, 2014, some of us gathered to get started. We started by naming the broad areas where we need to be active in order to create the future of our Future Story.

Congregational Working Meetings October 5 and October 26, 2014

For starters, Grace Church will look for progress with this list of four areas:

1. Connecting to gardens and gardeners in Framingham
 2. Gardening in the Grace Church field
 3. Building elevated garden beds and
 4. Cultivating our own skills for nourishing connections among people
- Each of these has its own story and explanation in this issue of *Grace Notes* (pages two and three). We'll gather after church one day soon to explore these areas, deepen them, get more specific, and get going!

And one more thing. Does this list of four areas look like the right list? If you think this list is missing an area of endeavor, let someone on the leadership team know (or tell the editor of *Grace Notes*!)

Continued on page two

How Shall We Next Be In Ministry?

Connecting the Gardeners

1 Have you reread the Future Story for Grace Church lately? A reader might be struck by all the references to people from other garden-loving enterprises, like Transition Framingham and Stearns Farm. Just a little research shows that the list of people who are engaging with gardening in Framingham grows longer every year. There are groups and individuals who have well-established habits of gardening and paying attention to gardens, like the Framingham Garden Club and the New England Wildflower Society. There are civic efforts that look like Victory Gardens.

There are many backyard gardeners too. People love to eat a tomato or display some flow-

ers they grew themselves! So are we late to the party, as it were? Does everyone have the same ideas we have? Not exactly.

The Grace Church contribution will include gardens of one sort and another just like these other folks. Additionally, we hope to provide connective tissue for the gardening energy in town.

Some of the gardening efforts are focused on ownership and membership. This provides them with orderliness and the ability to survive year after year. Our idea is that when one gardener talks to another, they find or create a common language and a new relationship. Our idea is that paying attention to one's own garden is entirely appropriate and seeing how one is moving in rhythm with and with similar purpose to other people in town creates relationships. Some of these relationships will arise, we hope, from people who are currently separated. So the common engagement with raising food (and flowers) will create connection where there has been separation.

What will the work under this heading be? We'll figure that out together! We might start by cataloguing and establishing contact with other gardeners. We might sponsor - or even better co-sponsor - education and information sharing events. Who do you know?

Home Field Gardening

2 We love our big field, stretching out toward the tall trees and filling up with sunlight. Some of us are wondering if the field could make a good garden. There may be people in our part of town who would garden if there were some available garden spaces and some support. Perhaps that is a role for our big field or the yard in front by the stone wall?

To begin the story of home field gardening, we have some practical steps to take. Is the soil good? How shall we handle the problem of a raised bed affecting the available square footage in the Baiting Brook flood plain? How will gardeners irrigate? Would we organize like a Victory Garden as is the way at the First Methodist Church? How might we encourage the growing of crops non-traditional in Framingham? How much sunlight actually hits the field? (and what about asking the same questions about 80 Newbury Street?)

The project plan to explore this area of activity can have a host of fairly short tasks on it in no time!



Accessible Gardening - Elevated Beds

3 This summer, I (Brad) paid special attention to gardens in our part of the world. Schools have gardens. Departments of Public Works and Park and Rec have gardens. Lots of towns have civic Victory Gardens. In all of the places I looked, I saw almost no garden beds that a person using a wheelchair could tend. Searching on the web did produce many more ideas but not a lot of stories of gardens accessible in this way.

Our own demonstration elevated bed was a fun project for many of us. It came true just as it was described in the Future Story document! I think we learned a lot about this kind of garden, just as we planned. Was it a complete success?

Our idea is that elevated garden beds have a different kind of accessibility. While they are aimed at a gardener in a wheelchair, they are also a way to bring aromatic herbs up to nose

level on a deck or a patio. Also, there is something wonderfully manageable about a garden in a box like the one we've built, don't you think?

There are many questions for this part of our future. How do we handle the irrigation/watering in a way that someone in a wheelchair can manage it? Is our first design optimal? Who might even want one or more of these elevated beds?

How much added support would we provide if we set one of these up at, say, the Carlyle House Nursing Home over on Winter Street? Should we go ahead and "mass produce" a half-dozen of these with the idea that we will more easily find a home for an elevated bed if it already exists? Can we bring down the cost (\$200.00 out of pocket just for the wood) and should we? This project is going to take some passion and imagination and hard work!

Cultivating our Cultural Proficiency

4 Can you remember the Mission Redefinition workshop? It was a very interesting exercise in using conversation to discern a future. Remember how we gathered our community along with some folks who are not regularly part of Grace Church? That Saturday morning we considered Framingham and tried to name the needs of our town. Then, out of the lists of needs, we considered which of those needs we might address with some integrity, some claim or aspiration of competence, some scope reasonably close to our resources. We claimed that day that we think we have some capability of leadership or empowerment when it comes to cultivating "authentic, positive connections among people of diverse cultural and economic backgrounds."

Some of us also recognize that good intentions are only a part of that capability. Grace church learned that as part of the process of becoming an Open and Affirming church. We may intend to be welcoming to everyone but those good intentions are not enough. For anyone who has ever experienced the exclusivity or intolerance at church, a general welcome sounds hol-

low. That is why our Statement of Inclusivity includes this coda, "We recognize that our openness must be placed so that all can see and that our affirmation requires affirmative steps."

This area of effort will involve everyone in the church. Our work to include people different from us in some way will take us beyond making a genuine effort and into some training that in 2014 is sometimes called cultural proficiency. Like gardening, we are not the only ones doing this work. The Welcoming Framingham group just sponsored a public salsa lesson in downtown Framingham! The Police pay significant attention to how to maintain public safety and grow community trust from people who grew up in another country. The Framingham Public Schools has ongoing effort to improve our kids' valuing of the differences among us. Part of our task is to learn in conjunction with people already doing this work. Part of our task is to figure out what we don't know and then go find out how to learn it. And the task will then become how to grow the cultural proficiency of the wider community.

October Calendar

Saturday, October 4

8:00 AM Men's Breakfast

Sunday, October 5

(Cans for Communion)*

9:00 AM Singers rehearse

10:00 AM Worship

Congregational Working Meeting

Wednesday, October 8

11:30 AM GWU meeting

Sunday, October 12

9:00 AM Singers rehearse

10:00 AM Worship

Wednesday, October 15

2:00 PM Service Carlyse House

Sunday, October 19

9:00 AM Singers rehearse

10:00 AM Worship

11:30 AM Faith in Action

Let's All Go to Lunch!

Wednesday, October 22

10:00 AM Book Club

Saturday, October 25

10:00 AM Foam Recycling

1:00 PM Transition

Framingham Event

Sunday, October 26

9:00 AM Singers rehearse

10:00 AM Worship

Congregational Working Meeting

Grace Women United

GWU will meet on Oct 8th at 11:30. Bring your bag lunch

Book Club



Book Club will meet on Wed Oct 22nd at 10:00AM. We will be discussing BENJAMIN FRANKIN'S BASTARD by Sally Cabot. This novel is based on historical facts

Foam Recycling Day



Saturday, October 25th, 2014
10:00 AM to 2:00 PM*

Please speak to Jean Burr
if you can lend a hand



Kermit's Korner

Here are some ways to optimize your cooking methods to ensure a greener planet.

1. Cover your pans while cooking. This can reduce cooking time and also your energy bill by 75 percent.
2. When you buy fresh food at your local farmer's market, you help reduce fuel waste and emissions from long-distance shipping.
3. Buy organic food. Organic foods are grown without the help of pesticides that harm the environment.
4. Say no to plastic bags and plastic bottles.
5. Recycle plastic and paper.
6. Buy in bulk to avoid excessive packaging material.
7. Grill food whenever possible.
8. Optimize your refrigerator's cooling system. Stuff your refrigerator or freezer with full water bottles and crumpled newspapers. This help improves cooling and save you both energy and money.
9. Use kitchen scraps and build a compost heap in your garden.
10. Cook in batches. Ovens use up a lot of energy; don't turn it on to make just one dish.
11. Reheat extra food. Reheating food uses up lesser energy than cooking food does.
12. Use gadgets that are eco-friendly. Use a bread maker instead of the oven. Use tiered steamers to cook several pans of vegetables.
13. Turn off the gas when the water starts boiling in pasta, potato or rice pans. Cover the pan; let the food cook on residual heat.
14. Solar ovens are easy to use and will save on energy bills.
15. An electricity monitor in your kitchen gives you real-time information on your home's overall energy consumption.
16. Use faucet aerators; reduce water consumption by up to 50%.
17. Cook with a crock pot to save energy.
18. If you cut your vegetables and meat into smaller pieces before cooking them, you'll find that cooking takes a lot less time.

Thanks! Kermit

Missions

Cans for Communion - October 5th

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



From our friends at First Parish Environment/Climate

Change Summit

Sat., Oct. 25

9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

First Parish Unitarian Universalist, Framingham

UU Mass Action in partnership with environmental action leaders in Massachusetts will present a panel of speakers from organizations including Clean Water Action, Better Future Project, Mothers Out Front and 350MA. Following the panel of speakers, participants will explore these issues through question and dialogue. Please join us for this interfaith community event!

From Our Pledge envelopes

Editor's Note: Many of us use pledge envelopes, but do you ever read them? There are some good messages:

- It is a heart that does the giving; the fingers only let go. *Nigeria saying*
- The heart of the giver makes the gift dear and precious. *Martin Luther*
- Life's most persistent and urgent question is: what are you doing for others? *Martin Luther King, Jr.*
- Give the love you have received to those around you. You must love with your time, your hands, and your hearts. You need to share all that you have. *Mother Teresa*
- Remember that when you leave this earth, you can take nothing that you have received...but only what you have given: a full heart enriched by honest service, love, sacrifice and courage. *Francis of Assisi*
- Every choice we make to spend, save, or give has an impact, creating a ripple effect. How each of us decides to live matters. *Laura Dunham (in Graceful Living)*

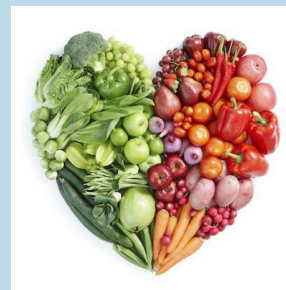
A TASTE OF COMPASSION FOR THE HOLIDAYS

With the growing awareness of the value of plant-based eating, perhaps you will have some vegan friends and family to cater for this year.

Come taste an exciting array of creative and delicious alternatives to the bird. Talk to the chefs, get some recipes, and leave everyone at your table satisfied.

Saturday October 25, 1:00 - 2:00 pm
Susan P Dickerman Hall
Edwards Church 39 Edwards St., Saxonville

Suggested donation: \$5



Sponsored by:
Transition Framingham and Open Spirit

More information at
transitionframingham.org

Storm Closings

This may be rather early to even think about church closings due to bad weather, but it isn't. The hurricane season is still with us even though it hasn't been very active. If the weather turns on us and 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, there is always the telephone (I have a landline so you can call me at home).

Ruth Carney

“Spread love everywhere you go; to show love for God and our neighbor we need not do great things. It is how much love we put in doing that makes our offering something beautiful to God.” —Mother Teresa

People of Grace,
Autumn is here. The trees are beginning to put on their fall colors. The weather has cooled (although, this past weekend feels more like summer). It is getting dark earlier and soon daylight savings time will soon be over.

- On World Communion Sunday (October 5), we celebrate the love of God in Jesus Christ with our brothers and sister in Christ in all denominations, and in all parts of the earth. We eat the bread of heaven, and drink the cup of blessing in communion with all Christians, remembering that in Christ there is no east or west, male or female,

Altar Flowers

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

old or young, no divisions based on race, ethnicity, orientation, or particular interpretations of the gospel message. On this day, we remember that in our incredible gift of diversity, through the divine working of the Holy Spirit, we are one body, whole and complete through Jesus Christ. May it be so.

- We will celebrate communion on first two Sundays in October (5th & 12th) and we will receive “cans for communion” at both services.

Please keep the world in your prayers. Praying for peace, for understanding, for ending conflict, for talking, for listening, for coming up with solutions and for justice may not be enough. But it may be. We must continue to pray. We must continue to seek an equitable peace for all. While you are

praying, please keep our country in your prayers. Pray for petty differences to end, and for understanding, and for all to do the right thing for our country. Pray for our community, pray for our church as we take 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!

*Shalom - how magical the sound.
Pacem - how lofty the thought.
Salaam - how welcome the feeling.
Peace - how far the journey.*
(Foerster, 2003)

May you always feel God's blessings,
Ruth Carney, Deacon

Deacon's Fund

It is again time to talk about the “Deacon's Fund?” And no - it's not a fund for deacons to have a good time. It is a budget item that at times needs to get replenished from the church family either by a designative donation or by a special offering. The fund is very low, actually it is almost gone. This fund is purposed for helping those in a particular need or in an emergency, it is not intended for an ongoing need. Monies collected feed the pastor's discretionary account so Pastor Brad would have the means to help individuals within and outside our congregation. The use of these monies is confidential. Many who have benefited have given back any funds they received when their need has reversed. 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 the amount of your donation doesn't matter. Every coin and dollar counts! Thank you!