

GRACE NOTES

Grace is a Green Church!

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

Opportunities for Study

Painting the Stars

This is a video-driven course from the same folks who brought out Living the Questions. Stay tuned for schedule information from Brad (which is not quite settled.)

Here is a description: "Mystery is a condition of awe, of resting precisely in an unknowing, long enough for the silence to have its way with us. The goal of this curriculum is to create some space for us to inhabit this mystery more deeply, and explore the relationship between science, particularly evolution, and religion. Perhaps most importantly, the hope is that each participant will feel from the inside what it is like to be the presence of all this creativity showing up after 13.7 billion years as him or her. Without this felt sense of being one with the creative process that is ceaselessly animating life, the conversation will remain objective and academic. We invite you to engage these seven weeks with an awareness that you are not separate from the creativity that produced you."

Bible Study

Pastor Brad will be holding weekly Bible Study on Mondays at 11:00 AM.

Initially, this gathering will be at Grace Church and focus on the lectionary readings for the following Sunday. For example, on Monday, September 9, we might look at Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28 and Psalm 14. What do we do with an angry God?

Come and join Brad for Bible Study.

Missions Reminder

The cans for communion collections will be on both September 1 and 8 in case people miss Labor Day weekend. The focus is SOUPS and STEWS.

New Beginnings September 8

New Beginnings Sunday is on September 8. We're going to share what we've learned together through the summer House Meetings, rally our energies for the new program year, and hold a conversation that will continue to move us toward our future. To make this special, we are going to change the time and place and format of Sunday. We'll start a half-hour later, we'll gather in the large meeting room (and dining room) at Edwards House, which is the big white house that is home to the Conference Center of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ (abbreviates to MACUCC).

Here is a Sunday not to miss! We want to form additional connections amongst us and have a fun time. Need we mention that kids are welcome? Actually, we hope everyone will make an effort to come for this event. Together we can see what God hopes we will see and go where God yearns for us to go.

September 8, 2013
Edwards House
Massachusetts Conference of the
UCC Conference Center
1 Badger Road, Framingham
10:30 Worship
11:30 Lunch and Program
1:00 Closing Moment
(we'll finish no later than 1:00)

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From the Pastor

Dear Ones,

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

- Mark 1:35-37

One of the recurring conversation topics among some of us is how little time we have. For some, these last days of August and the upcoming school year bring a spike of tasks, appointments, shopping trips, practices, etc. Others of us don't have the same school-year related crescendo of demands and our sense of not enough time comes from all the important things we've got on our plates. Some are tightly scheduled because of work. Some of us have a schedule that may not look jammed from the outside yet because we don't move as fast as we used to do, the simplest errands fill up the day.

This passage is sometimes used as an illustration of how Jesus was a busy guy. "Everyone is looking for you!" But I'm not so sure that fits. Here he was, with no watch, no bells ringing the hours over the town, no camp schedule for the day, no email to check (or any kind of mail for that matter), no doctor appointments, no grocery store to

get to, no vehicle that could move him any faster than he could walk, and he was a bachelor too. How busy could he have been?

I love the other part of the passage, the first sentence.

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

Here is a spiritual discipline and a practical adjustment to life's hurly-burly that each of us can choose. The text doesn't say that Jesus went on a silent retreat, silent meals for a week at some separate place. It doesn't say that he was away very long at all. I like a sports analogy now and then and there is a way in which even a short moment of stillness and prayer is like the moment when a platform diver comes to a full stop at the start of every dive. We like sports for images partly because so much of what sports is about is visible. The diver's deep, calming breath is visible to those of us watching; a moment of stillness.

A deep breath sounds good as a practical adjustment; punctuation for the next task. It is also a good place for you to start. Before you do each of the next three things in your day or evening, look into the distance or close your eyes, take a deep

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September Calendar

Sept. 1	10:00 AM	Cans for Communion Worship/Communion	Sept. 15	9:00 AM 10:00 AM	Singers rehearse Worship
Sept. 7	8:00 AM 11:00 AM	Men's Breakfast Worcester Pride March	Sept. 16	11:30 AM 9:00 AM	Green Team Bible Study
Sept. 8	9:30 AM 10:30 AM 11:30 AM	Cans for Communion Singers rehearse Conf. Ctr. Worship at Conference Ctr. Crossroads Convrstn/Lunch	Sept. 18	2:00 PM	Service at Carlyle House
Sept. 9	9:00 AM 7:30 PM	Bible Study Women's Lectio	Sept. 19	7:30 PM	Stewards Ministry (at Browns)
Sept. 11	11:30 AM 5:30 PM 7:00 PM	Grace Women United 9/11 Observance Cushing Park Ecclesiastical Council for Worcester Fellowship at Trinity Northborough	Sept. 22	9:00 AM 10:00 AM 11:30 AM	Singers rehearse Worship Faith in Action
			Sept. 23	11:00 AM	Bible Study
			Sept. 25	10:00 AM	Book Club
			Sept. 29	9:00 AM 10:00 AM 12:00 PM	Singers rehearse Worship FIA Lunch
			Sept. 30	11:00 AM	Bible Study



Grace Church and the Environment

At the Crossroads meeting that met at my house, we talked about what defines Grace Church. Those of us at my meeting (and I'm sure all the meetings) spoke proudly about Styrofoam and Stearns Farm and the work of the Green Team. We felt good as we filled out those little stickies with so many green initiatives at our church. Grace has even become a UCC Level 2 Green Church. We can be proud of ourselves not only for Level 2, but as we strive towards Level 3.

Ever since we moved to Salem End Road, Grace has been trying to figure out who we are. Will we be the church that invites the college students to a coffee house in the fellowship hall? Are we the church that will reach out to area nursing homes? Perhaps our future is some sort of community program. None of these felt like quite the right fit.

Personally, Grace becoming a green church sort of snuck up on me. Yes, I recycle my bulletin and coffee cup after church. Sure, I'll volunteer at Stearns Farm (fun!). And I'll lend a hand with styrofoam (in spite of that mouse that jumped out of a bag of styrofoam and is now living in our field). And - yes - I joined the Green Team and write a Kermit's Korner every once in a while.

It wasn't until Crossroads that I was struck

with a huge sense of pride about what Grace Church has become. We're no longer that little church that worships in a house and is struggling to survive. We're Grace Church, a force to be reckoned with when it comes to saving our climate. We've joined with Edwards to offer environmental movies/programs, we're part of Transition Framingham, we plant trees, we recycle plastic bags and we strive to save on energy in our building. The list of what Grace does to raise both our own and the community's consciousness about the environment is astonishing.

And that's not to discount all our other outreach work - from socks for the homeless in Worcester, to books for Appalachia to Homelessness and Gay Pride walks to collections for the Food Pantry.

I so appreciated the Crossroads meetings which helped me to get the big picture of just how much Grace does. Yes - we are a small but mighty congregation. But - wow - are we ever passionate. I don't have any idea about the future of our church, but I sure know that here and now, we are making a difference. And we can be proud of that.

Linda Hilliard

Green Team Update (August meeting)

When we last met, on August 18, there was nothing to report from St. Andrews Church about their solar project, not did we receive a report from our recent energy audit.

We discussed a program recently offered by Transition Framingham through an organization known as Next Step Living. Brad showed us some excerpts from their presentation (known as Cool Heat Program) and we voted to have him contact them to see if they would be willing to meet with us next month so that we can learn more. Jean also said that



there will be a representative from that company at our next foam collection in October.

We had an exciting conversation about the creation of a "Green" T-shirt for Grace. There will be more information about this as the plan evolves so be thinking of meaningful phrases/graphics which might be appropriate and catchy!

Our next meeting is scheduled for September 15, following worship. Please plan to stay for it!

Jean Burr

From the Pastor *Continued from page two*

breath (how deep? In your mind, say to yourself, “Here I am, taking a deep breath,”) and exhale. Then do your task. Do it again when you finish that task before you start the next one. Let the

phone ring another time or two if you have to. Just try that out.

But what about the spiritual discipline part? I’d like to take a cue from Pastor Debbie Clark’s reflection this past Sunday. Debbie spoke about how an attitude

of gratitude within her creates an attitude of gratitude. Did you hear that too? She reported to us how she noticed that her choice to feel gratitude engendered more gratitude. When she made herself regard a person, an object, a moment with gratitude frequently enough, she found herself “naturally” feeling gratitude all the time. Why is that a spiritual discipline? Well, one of the great prayers, as Anne Lamott pointed out, is, “Thanks.” And that’s what you say in your mind when you exhale, “Thanks.”

Christian Education

Grace Church would like to thank all those who contributed to our christian education over the summer, whether through worship, service, groups or lessons. Thank you to Mary Memmott who organized and led Camp Grace for our children. Raechel Belloli did a great job in starting to learn how to teach Sunday School. (How exciting!). Many thanks also to Nancy Brown and Ronda Yeomans for supporting her in these endeavors.



In: “Here I am, taking a deep breath.” Out: “Thanks.”

Coming up this month is a new beginning in Grace Church Sunday School. Hence, parents (and perhaps any older/interested children) need to meet to discuss what they would like from the Sunday School program this year and how they are available to make those goals realities. Some ideas include: 1) continuing with intergenerational worship services approximately twice a month where christian education accessible to and involving all ages is an integral part of the service, 2) continuing separate Sunday School lessons (after the first twenty minutes of service) approximately twice a month, and 3) starting a new christian education opportunity during worship time which would be group led by the confirmands (and perhaps a few interested others, TBD) and supervised by Ruth Carney. One possible goal of this alternate Christian education opportunity would be for the participants to plan worship services themselves and then lead those services weeks in the future. The Grace Church community is very grateful to Ruth for proposing that she spend this additional time and energy helping our youth deepen their spiritualities.

Before any of this can start, parents, teachers and students need to meet to discuss goals and how to proceed. Please email Ronda Yeomans ASAP to let her know when you might be available to participate in such a meeting over the next few weeks. The second Sunday in September, this year September 8th, was formerly called “Rally Day,” but now has been aptly renamed “New Beginnings Sunday” by the leadership team. Our new Sunday School term can begin as soon as we agree on goals, methods, participants and leaders. Thank you.

If you haven’t established the habit of frequent stillness and frequent prayer to God, you now have instruction on one simple way to start.

I choose not to judge myself or you when it comes to good habits of spiritual discipline. Still, you might want to consider this a call to you, a call to take steps toward a more adult relationship with the holy. If you are not yet praying regularly, however briefly, I’d like you to consider that adopting prayer and other spiritual habits is part of the task of forming your life, your life as one following the way of Jesus.

I think that Simon and his companions knew where to look for Jesus in the “solitary place” because it was the way of Jesus to find the time to pray every day, like a habit. You too, okay?

*Peace and Blessing,
Pastor Brad*

Ronda Yeomans

Deacons

People of Grace,

Some quotes for the day:

"I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear." - Martin Luther King, Jr.

"I love how little kids skip and bounce when they walk. An ordinary moment is filled with joy enough to dance. Just cuz. Lord, let the children lead us! Lord, let us follow!" - Rev. Greg Morisse (one hour after our joint service on August 25th)

"The things you take for granted someone else is praying for..." - FB/Joy of Dad

Labor Day weekend is the unofficial end of summer - the last hurrah, so to speak. Labor Day brings to mind picnics, cookouts and family gatherings. But the holiday was created in 1882 to honor the social and economic contributions of American workers.

In a strong economy, it's easy to take for granted the ability to work and be paid well. But times have changed during the past few years, with many people still struggling with unemployment and underemployment. After our holiday celebrations this year, let's give thanks for the jobs we have, pray for those who aren't as fortunate and offer words of encouragement or help to someone who needs it.

School has begun, cooler weather approaches, nature will decorate with many fall colors. Did you enjoy the summer? Did you find time for renewal? Did

you experience physical and mental refreshment? Did you make memorable memories? We would love to hear about your summer experiences! Remember it is important to take some time to replenish yourself even if it is only a few minutes each day.

In September, communion will be celebrated the first two Sundays (1st & 8th) and we will restart cans for communion. September 8th will be a special service at Edwards House at the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ (MACUCC) at 10:30 AM. The entrances are on Badger Rd and Salem End Rd. The service will be followed by lunch and conversations about the Crossroads House Meetings we had over the summer. Please mark your calendars and plan to come. If you were unable to attend the house meetings, you will be able to get up to date on this process. If you attended these house meetings, you can find out what the other groups had to say.

On another note, the world news is flooded with trouble in the Middle East. What this means for them, for us, for the world, is frightening. 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.

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.).

Please do not forget that we care about your wellbeing, if we 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!

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 for the Deacon Ministry Team (Ruth Carney, Karolyne White)

Grace Women United

GWU will meet at the church on Wednesday, September 11th at 11:30 AM.

Lynn Burdett

Book Club



Book Club will meet at the church on Wednesday, September 25th at 10:00 AM.

Lynn Burdett

Like to Provide
Altar Flowers?



Speak to Ruth Carney

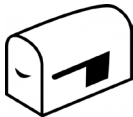
Faith in Action

Watch for announcements from FIA on upcoming fall activities. We are bringing, after church lunches. We might also plan a game night and movie outings. Help us plan some of these activities by attending the next FIA meeting on September 22nd and join us for our first after church lunch on September 26th.

Students are back!

A reminder that Framingham University students are returning and will be using our parking lot. Be sure you have a church dove sticker on your car's back window, and, please, do not park in the rented spaces during the week. Stickers are available on the bookcase in the fellowship hall.

If you receive your Grace Notes by Mail



The majority of Grace Notes readers receives their issue electronically. If you are among those who receive paper copies, we wonder if you might like to switch to electronic (this would save 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. Thanks

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Deacons

Deacon's Fund

Are you aware of the "Deacon's Fund?" And no - it's not a fund for the deacons to have a good time. It is a non-budget item that gets 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!

Worcester Fellowship News: Is Worcester Fellowship a Church?

We have visited, dined with, and brought socks to Worcester Fellowship since Rev. Mary and Rev. Liz began to gather people on the Worcester Common. They have now posed the question, is Worcester Fellowship a church? To become a church, a member of the Central Association like Grace Church is, a gathered group has to ask and be granted status. Part of that journey involves the churches of the association to gather, hear what they have to say to us, question them, deliberate, and vote. It is a holy and deepening experience. Since we are part of the Central Association, we are called to attend and participate and vote. I'm pretty sure the Worcester Fellowship people are counting on Grace! So, will you attend? September 11, 2013, 7:00 PM, Trinity Church, Northborough

Announcing the 2nd Annual Gala Dinner

Saturday, Sept 21, 2013, Mosaic Commons, 22 Village Lane, Berlin, MA Join us for an exquisite five course dinner at the cohousing village of Mosaic Commons. Treat yourself to fellowship, fun and good food, along with a chance to support and learn more about Worcester Fellowship and our work to end isolation among homeless and at risk adults. \$50 per person, Please RSVP to GALA DINNER by September

14th. (Send payment to Worcester Fellowship, PO Box 3510 Worcester MA 01613 or pay at the door.)

<http://www.worcesterfellowship.org>