

Grace is a Green Church!

GRACE NOTES

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

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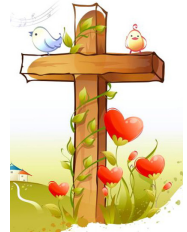
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Nancy Brown, Frank Carney,
Ruth Carney, Mary Memmott,
Terri Taylor, Brad Watters

In this Issue

- August 24th Service.....1
- Congregational Mtg.....1
- From the Pastor.....2
- Church Calendar.....2
- Circle of Food.....3
- Kermit's Korner.....4
- Faith in Action4
- In Case of Emergency.....5
- Transition PotLuck.....5
- Christian Ed.....4
- GWU/Book Club.....4

10:00 AM, Sunday, August 24, Grace Church on the Grass!

Our brothers and sisters from Plymouth and Edwards will gather with us for a shared worship service. Bring a lawn chair or two; choose your footwear appropriately,



Diaper Collection

Our special collection this year is to respond to the Family Services Coalition request for: Diapers (size 5) and Wipes (of the sort a diaper changer uses).

Report From June Congregational Meeting

Linda Dunbrack, our Moderator, convened the June Annual Meeting on June 15th at 10:07 AM. That's right! At Grace Church in recent years we hold some congregational meetings during our morning worship.

In the congregational tradition, meetings are found to be places where the Spirit has a special role and finds unique power. We make an effort to honor the important structure of an official meeting and the focus on healthy discussion, clear information, and getting done the business at hand. We make a parallel effort to sing praise to our God, to tell the stories of the Bible and faith traditions, to respond to these stories, and to pray together. Our annual meetings are unusual, to say the least!

Worship began with everyone singing *This Little Light of Mine*, which is a response to Jesus's call that we not "hide our light under a bushel." The presentation of the 2014 Annual Report emphasizes some of the ministries in which people of the Grace Church community engage through the program year, letting their light shine. (It tells merely some of the story because much of what we do doesn't quite fit in the Annual Report format. Much of what we do can be found here, in Grace Notes!)

Our reading from the Bible came from the story of Joseph, the part in Genesis 39 where he is accused unjustly and jailed in Egypt. We followed the reading with a conversation about how we might be in ministry on behalf of someone in jail. For more specific information about this powerful conversation, please contact Pastor Brad.

On behalf of the Treasurer, Walter Brown, and the Stewards Ministry Team, a concise Financial Statement was presented.

Continued on page six

From the Pastor

Dear Ones,

“Is it by your wisdom that the hawk soars, and spreads its wings toward the south?

Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up and makes its nest on high?

It lives on the rock and makes its home in the fastness of the rocky crag.

From there it spies the prey; its eyes see it from far away.

Its young ones suck up blood; and where the slain are, there it is.”

- Job 39:26-30

Someone is speaking. Can you remember who speaks thus in Job’s grand story of misfortune and fate? It is part of the song God sings - or hollers - at Job when God decides to set the record straight. The speech is another of the creation stories, among the many in the Bible, and this one comes from the very voice of God!

I love these passages. God is upbraiding Job (although God’s real targets are Job’s “learned friends”) with a voice dripping with sarcasm...and yet poetry. “Is it by your wisdom” is sarcastic. Then notice the beauty of “that the hawk soars, and spreads its wings toward the south?” “Is it at your command,” is sarcastic. “That the eagle mounts up and makes its nest on high,” is beautiful.

Then something even more compelling happens in the passage. God loses it. God is caught in wonder at creation even though it is the work of God’s own word, God’s own will. The voice seems to lose track of the scolding and go off

in another direction entirely, marveling at how the hawk hunts and how its “young ones” are fed. Do you hear it? God is in love with all that is created. God’s delight and awe in the face of nature is overwhelming even to God; just like it is to you!

Earlier this summer, I noticed that some of our church garden vegetables were nibbled to the nub. I suspected a few local residents. In particular, I had my eye on the groundhog who lives under the Grace Church shed. I did not forget to suspect the bunny (undoubtedly one of many) who is fond of the grass that grows beneath the elevated garden, where the lawn mower doesn’t go. I also had the seemingly infinite number of turkeys who make a daily promenade through the field on my list. Only just now am I considering that deer, chipmunks, mice, opossums, raccoons, skunks, and squirrels are also potential diners, although I haven’t observed them myself. And there are other kinds of birds too.

It is tempting to think of them all as pests; vermin determined to thwart our attempts to grow some herbs for human consumption. I suppose they are. They may in fact thwart my plans to grow a tomato in the yard this year.

Perhaps another way to think of it is that they are operating from another plan. Perhaps our rational approach to creating free food for Framingham is only one plan. After all:

Continued on page six

September Calendar

Sunday, August 24

10:00 AM Joint Service with Edward and Plymouth at Grace

Sunday, August 31st

9:00 AM Singers rehearse

10:00 AM Worship

Saturday, September 6

8:00 AM Men’s Breakfast

Sunday, September 7

(Cans for Communion)*

9:00 AM Singers rehearse

10:00 AM Worship

2:00 PM Transition Framingham
Pot Luck

Wednesday, September 10

11:30 AM GWU meeting

Sunday, September 14

9:00 AM Singers rehearse

10:00 AM Worship

Wednesday, September 17

2:00 PM Service at Carlylse House

Sunday, September 21

9:00 AM Singers rehearse

10:00 AM Worship

11:30 AM Faith in Action Mtg

Let’s All Have Lunch!

Location TBD

Wednesday, September 24

10:00 AM Book Club

Sunday, September 28

9:00 AM Singers rehearse

10:00 AM Worship

Tales from Grace's Gardens

The Circle of Food



Editor's Note: Grace's participation at Stearns Farm (donating the produce to the New Hope Food Pantry) and our summer Herb Garden (which benefits the community) have garnered several wonderful feel-good stories.

- We have a volunteer named Heather who is a member of Edwards Church. When she delivered the Stearns Farm share in August, the pantry was unexpectedly closed. However, a lot of folks were there because they didn't know it was closed. Heather was able to give away all the veggies so that those who showed up didn't go away empty handed. Instead of being annoyed, she said it was a good experience because she got to talk more to the recipients, and she had something good to offer. I've had similar experiences over the years. -- *Mary Memmott*

- Late one morning, my sister-in-law arrived with food from her church's Victory Garden, and there was only one woman there. She gladly took some veggies. There was also donated bread that had been dropped off and was getting damp. Christine encouraged the woman to take some bread, but she declined. Christine took it upon herself to find somewhere to give the rest of her veggies and the bags of bread and through a series of door-knocks, phone calls, e-mails, etc. she found Grace House downtown. They were thrilled with the food because they do a Saturday night supper. The pastor's wife (who had used pantries herself in the past) said Christine had done a good thing by offering the woman food that she could refuse. Having a choice (veggies, bread) is something we take for granted, but that you don't always get at a pantry. Having the luxury of saying no is a privilege. -- *Mary Memmott*

- I was at Stearns recently and mentioned to one of the staff how Grace shares its produce with the New Hope Pantry. She was so moved by what we do, we went together to the "not-the-best-of-the-crop" bins (no quantity limits) and she went through it with me - piece by piece - to find the better produce. Our donation to the pantry went up by another third that week.

-- *Linda Hilliard*

- My sister-in-law, Christine, and nephew, Ryan, brought veggies to Grace House (from the First Methodist victory garden). The church was thrilled, but to make room in their fridge, they gave her a platter of cupcakes and cakes donated from BJ's that they didn't really want. Christine didn't want the pastries either, but took them to be polite. She gave them to me and I brought them to Grace Church on Sunday, where several people enjoyed them. Then Ronda brought the leftovers to Pathways. -- *Mary Memmott*

Sharing our Herb Garden (from Brad)

- Our neighbor at 84 Salem End Road, across Baiting Brook from us, is Aniruddha Weling and his family. "Ani" and his two boys were playing soccer on our big field and having a great time. I invited them to clip herbs and check out the elevated garden bed. I wonder if they took some!

- Another of our neighbors is Andrew McDonnell. Andrew and his family live at 101 Salem End Road, the red house across the street and on the corner of Salem End Road and Winter Street. Andrew and his two-year-old daughter and five-month-old son were walking their dog in the Grace Church field. The dog is quite friendly. I invited them to check out the elevated garden and use the scissors to take some herb clippings. The little girl said, "You mean, we can go see the flowers?" The answer was, "Yes! Aren't they good!"

- A young man and his dog were sitting on the steps of the house immediately across the street from our church driveway. I approached him and asked if they were tenants there. It turned out that he was visiting. I invited him to clip some herbs and to pass the word onto the friend he was visiting. While he was glad to do that, he mentioned that his girlfriend lived in the apartments on our side of Salem End Road on the other side of the railroad tracks and past the parking lot. He said he would be sure to mention the herbs to her!



Bees and Monarchs in Trouble

According to the Natural Resource Defense Council (NRDC), bee colonies and monarch butterflies in this country are in serious trouble. The following are excerpts from their latest newsletter.

“Bee colonies continue to collapse nationwide at an alarming rate. Not only do bees pollinate countless wild plants that produce food for animals ranging from songbirds to grizzly bears, but they pollinate 71 of the 100 crops that make up 90 percent of what we eat, such as apples, strawberries, carrots & broccoli. One out of every three bites of food we take depends on bees. The Harvard School of Public Health found that even at sublethal doses, exposure to certain neonics (found in the most widely used insecticides in the world) appears to cause bee colonies to collapse over the winter. The EPA is saying it wants until 2019 to complete a review of neonic use. Jennifer Sass, a senior scientist at NRDC says, ‘We don’t have five years to wait--bees are dying today’”

“The number of monarch butterflies is plummeting--migrating numbers are down from 1 billion to a mere 33 million--due to the rampant use of herbicides in agriculture. What’s needed are more habitats to restore milkweed, the only plant where monarchs lay their eggs and on which their larva can feed.”

So, Kermit is worried and wants us to:

- Carefully monitor the sprays which we use in our gardens and yards. There are several environmentally safe products available which work just fine.
- Be aware of those milkweed plants which may pop up in your neighborhood. Let them thrive for the occasional monarch visitor. Butterflies are pollinators too!
- Sign any letters, petitions available to ask the EPA to act now!

Jean Burr (on behalf of Kermit)

Foam Collection

WOW--What a wonderful turn out for our 20th collection of foam in July! I’m not only talking about overstuffing the trailer and box truck with product, but also the hard working volunteers who were there to do it! Kudos and a sincere thank you to Frank, Dick, Evie, Bev, Lynn, Zach, Josh and Brad, some of our Grace regulars, but also to Sean, a student at McAuliffe, Amy & Bilan, from Next Step Living, and, of course, Barbara & Andy from ReFoamIt. Even the weather cooperated!

It’s hard to believe that on October 25, which is Make a Difference Day, we will begin our sixth year of quarterly collections of Styrofoam. Put the date on your calendar!

Thanks! Not Ready For Anytime Players

It was nearly a month ago when many of Grace’s members and friends met for dinner and a theater (?) presentation of “The Case of the Mysterious Benefactor.” Cast members hope that those who attended had as much fun as they had rehearsing and performing. (All who were there will attest to the fact that the name of the group is very fitting.)

Without the direction of Daleen Perkins, this event would not have happened. Thank you, so very much, Daleen, for your time and expertise. Kudos also to those who prepared and served the delicious meal-- Beverly Ablondi, Lynn Burdett, Linda Hilliard, Evelyn McGuirk, Katie Michaud, and Judy Sebastian.

Without the support of the audience, this type of fellowship at Grace could not happen. The generous good will offering exactly covered the expenses of the evening. The cast members are grateful to you as well.

Thank you to our performers: Amelia Burton, George Burton, Jean Burr, Frank Carney, Ruth Carney, Brad Watters and Eleanor Yeoman.

Jean Burr

Are You Ready in Case of an Emergency?

Have you ever thought of disaster preparedness? I have. Have I done anything about it? No. Perhaps I should. Perhaps you should. You never know when something might happen.

The Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ's Disaster Resource Team has put together a "Basic Emergency Preparedness in the Home."

These tips will help you get prepared ahead of time. (It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark...) Are you prepared to leave immediately? Ready to "shelter in place" if necessary? Disasters happen...fire, flood, nor'easter, explosion, tornado, snowstorm, hurricane, chemical spill, landslide, gas leak, etc. Help keep your family safe. Take a few steps to prepare now!

Make a checklist of items you'll need to gather and add at the last minute.

- **Go Bag:** A "go bag" is similar to an overnight bag packed for a few days. It can be a backpack. Pack all weather clothing, blanket or sleeping bag, toiletries (personal items such as contact lenses/case/solution, eyeglasses, reading glasses, hearing aids & batteries, feminine

products), medicines (one week supply for you, family members & pets) & if they need to be refrigerated, a cooler and ice packs; infant items such as diapers & pacifiers.

- **Food:** Pack a 3 day supply of non-perishable food & a manual can opener. Plan on one gallon of water per person per day. Infant formula & bottles. Pet food and water for your pets.

- **Safety items:** First aid kit, flashlight & extra batteries, hand sanitizer, moist towelettes, baby wipes, toilet paper, matches in a waterproof container, whistle, trash bags and twist-ties, dust mask, duct tape, bleach.

- **Money:** Small bills & coins. (Credit/debit relies on power. Stores may not be able to make change.)

- **Pets:** In addition to food, water, and any meds, bring your pet's leash/collar, pet carrier and pet's photo.

- **Communication tools:** Cell phone, tablet, or laptop with chargers. Portable battery operated radio or television & extra batteries. There could be power/phone failures.

- **Identification:** Photocopies of identification, credit cards, and other important documents. Seal important documents in airtight plastic baggies. Back up your computer/phone in the Cloud.

- **Emergency Plan:** If you can't go back home, where will you go? Have a meeting place (close by for a sudden emergency or further away if you can't return home). Have family members check in with a designated out-of-state emergency contact person. Include your family members & any caregivers in the emergency plan. Caregivers for elderly and ability-challenged family members may not be able to accompany you. Pets may not be allowed in public shelters. Review your kit and plan annually or as your family needs change. Refresh items as necessary.

- **Auto:** Is there gas in your car? Consider keeping extra supplies in the vehicle and at your workplace.

- **Misc:** You may need tools/wrench, utensils, a map of the local area, or other things unique to you.

*I hope you find this information is helpful.
Blessings, Ruth Carney*

LOCAVORE POTLUCK PICNIC

Bring a dish to share, made with at least one locally grown ingredient.



Sunday Sept. 7 2-5pm

(rain date Sept. 14)

Butterworth Park Arthur St, Framingham

We will provide tables for the food, plus plates, flatware, cups, water and lemonade.

You bring a blanket, lawn chairs etc.

Transitionframingham@yahoo.com
or call 508-628-9294

Transition Framingham is a group of citizens working towards a more sustainable future for Framingham in the face of economic instability and climate change. Check us out at transitionframingham.org

Pastor's Column

Continued from page one

"Is it by your wisdom that the groundhog digs deep, and makes an exit from under the shed to all the compass points around? Is it at your command that the bunny watches and turns like lighting to vanish from the yard?

They live near the earth and make a home where it is cool and dark and invisible.

They see wider than 180 degrees and notice every shadow, every quivering leaf.

They might know the coming weather and how to escape the flood.

They make many young for the meek shall inherit the earth."

Enjoy your vegetables, flowers, and all your gardens, beloved. Then give a sweet prayer of thanks to the one who finds joy in all growing things, who longs to heal all blighted and benighted things, and who, most particularly, loves you, loves you, loves you.

Peace and Blessing

Brad

Grace Women United

GWU will meet on Wed. Sept. 10th at 11:30AM.

Book Club



Book Club will meet on Sept 24th at 10:00AM we will discuss books we individually chose to read over the summer and pick a book for October

Congregational Meeting

Continued from page one

The Membership report prompted a brief discussion about who is officially a member, in terms of the current bylaws. Members of the Leadership Ministry Team commented we inherited practices of membership that made sense in the past. Now we live in a different time and it makes sense for us to reconsider what "best practices" are for acknowledging those who commit to the ministries of Grace Church, those who self-identify as part of the Grace Church family, etc. Now that we have a redefined mission, there are many issues such as membership that we can address.

Redefined Mission

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

During discussion of the Annual Report, attendees noted that our Future Story was not included. The Future Story is an imagined news story written about how Grace Church has acted and what Grace Church has accomplished given it's commitment to the 2014 mission redefinition - viewed from the perspective of 2019! If you would like a copy of that Future Story, please contact Pastor Brad. With the amendment

made to add this document to the report, the 2014 Annual Report was accepted.

The gathered church unanimously affirmed the slate of currently serving officers and teams.

These days, it is customary at Grace Church to speak at the time of Offering our Financial Gifts about how we will next be in ministry. That moment takes on somewhat more weight when we gather in Congregational Meeting and when we consider our next ministries in light of our new call. How, then, shall we next be in ministry as we live "into" the place and the life to which we believe God has called us?

Some of the new ways people suggested were inviting our neighbors to harvest herbs from our herb garden, bring plants from Stearns Farm to gardens at Grace and around town, invite people who grew up in another part of the world to come plant vegetables and herbs that may be hard to find in stores, ask folks who know how to cook to share recipes, create a sunken garden (to avoid negative impact on "flood-plain" zoned land,) and create a "rain garden."

Worship closed with the singing of *I'm Gonna Work So God Can Use Me* (anytime, anywhere!) Now that's an Annual Meeting!

Brad Watters