

GRACE NOTES

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

Holy Week and Easter at Grace

Palm Sunday, March 28
10:00 AM Service

Maundy Thursday, April 1
7:00 PM Service

Community Good Friday Service, April 2
Edwards Church
12:00 Noon

Easter Sunday, April 4
10:00 AM Service

For details, see the Deacon's column on page five.

Two Special Events

Grace to Host End of Life Seminar

The Faith in Action Team is excited to host a special seminar on Saturday, April 17 - Exploring End of Life Issues. This free event will include talks by an estate planning attorney, a representative of a local funeral home, and Pastor Brad Watters.

See page three of this newsletter for details.

Seating will be limited to 40. If you would like to attend, reserve soon so that we will be sure to include you.

We are having catered sandwiches for lunch; however, we could use some donations of finger desserts and healthy snacks for dessert and during the afternoon break.

If you are interested in attending - or can help out with desserts, contact:
Pastor Brad, Jean Burr or Linda Hilliard.

Taking Stock

Sunday, March 28

Friends Meeting House

841 Edmands Road, Framingham

1:30 PM to 4:00 PM

Two years ago, the Grace Church family met at the UCC Conference Center to talk about redevelopment and to fill out the Natural Church Development survey. It is time for us to convene again. How have we progressed in our redevelopment over the past two years? We'll review where we are on redevelopment and retake that survey.

Desserts and beverages will be provided during our meeting. There will be child care, although we are also planning on the children participating.

Please plan on attending this important meeting.

Pastor's Note

Dear Ones,

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus ...
 - Hebrews 12

Perhaps you have run a race in your life? Where do you remember running? Perhaps it was one of those races against your mom or dad that you somehow seemed to win all the time! Maybe it was in elementary school where the physical education teachers seem to know an amazing number of different kinds of relay races. You may have run around a track or along a cross-country trail. Anyone ever run a road race?

Races give us a great gift. When you are in the race, that's the only thing you are doing. You are focused on the running and you have one goal, which is

the finish line. In the rest of our lives, we don't always have as clear or singular a goal. What's the goal of being someone's son or daughter? What's the goal of laughter? Where is the finish line for grieving? ... for loving? ... for beauty?

There is no finish line in church redevelopment. That makes it a challenge to explain to each other what the point of redevelopment might be. How can we deal with that open-endedness? How do we move forward if we're not clear what direction is forward? How will we know when we get there?

From time to time, I try to share some gems from the flood of insight and experience that redevelopment literature has to offer. From time to time, we come up with gems of our own. Somewhere in the midst of the box of gems is this one.

This is a race that is only won when we cross the finish line together.

That poses some difficulties! For one thing, we are a diverse crew, here on the S.S. Grace Church. We have different gifts, different tempos, different energy, different likes and dislikes. It's hard to know all of those things about each other. Can you see how that makes it hard for us to pull in a single direction? We may exhort each other to pull together, to move forward, to commit. We may also fill with frustration that we can't see that we're all pulling together. Which then seems like we are not moving forward. Which then leads us to question our shared commitment.

I have two suggestions.

The first is that we make room for God. You may need to make use of some imagination here. Ready? Ask, "Where might God be leading us?" Try it out. Say to yourself, "God might be leading us to" Try it today, then later today, then tomorrow morning.

Continued on page four

Grace Church calendar - April

March 28	Palm Sunday 8:45 AM Singers 10:00 AM Worship 11:15 Am Bake Sale 1:30 PM All church meeting - Friend's Meeting House	April 11	8:45 AM Singers 10:00 AM Worship 1:30 PM Cooking Workshop
April 3	8:00 AM Men's Group 9:00 AM Spring cleanup	April 14	11:30 AM GWU
April 4	Easter Sunday Cans for Communion 8:45 AM Singers 10:00 AM Worship	April 17	9:30 AM End of Life Seminar
April 5	7:30 PM Women's Lectio	April 18	8:45 AM Singers 10:00 AM Worship
April 10	9:00 AM Spring cleanup	April 21	7:30 PM Stewards
		April 24	Styrofoam Recycling at Grace
		April 25	8:45 AM Singers 10:00 AM Worship
		April 28	10:00 AM Book Club 5:30 PM Eagles dinner

Please Spread the Word About This Seminar!

Exploring End of Life Decisions

Saturday, April 17
10:00 AM to 2:30 PM
(Registration at 9:30 AM)

This seminar is designed to help you and your family deal with end of life issues.

- **Estate Planning Attorney Tracey Ingle** will discuss Avoiding Probate, Estate Planning, Wills, Health Care Proxies, Medicaid, Veteran's Benefits, Power of Attorney, Charitable Planning.
- **Advanced Planning Specialist Joe Markey from Wadsworth Chiappini Funeral Home** will review how to plan ahead for a funeral, what to expect when dealing with a funeral director, how to make this difficult time a little easier.
- **Reverend Bradford Watters of Grace Church** will talk about dealing with the culmination of our lives, preparing a funeral or memorial service, and talking with friends and family about your wishes.

Reservations are required - the deadline is April 10.
(We are limiting enrollment to 40.)
Lunch and snacks provided.

*The Grace Church Faith In Action Team is underwriting the entire cost of the day.
There is no charge for this Seminar.*

Speak to Brad, Jean or Linda if you would like to attend.

Missions

By Mary Memmott

April Cans for Communion

Please bring SOUP, STEWS, and SPAGHETTI SAUCE for Easter Sunday (April 4)! The Framingham Food Pantry continues to see a great need for food in our community. Remember that expired, damaged or unlabeled cans cannot be safely donated. All are welcome to sign up on the bulletin board to help deliver our monthly collection on a Saturday morning – see Mary Memmott with any questions.

Worcester Fellowship

Thank you for socks, snacks

The Sunday school students and parents delivered approximately 250 pairs of socks, 50 sandwiches, and numerous snack and paper good supplies to the Worcester Fellowship community on Sunday, March 14. Thanks to the people of Grace for your enthusiastic support of this ministry, and especially to the hardy souls of all ages who braved a very cold rain to worship outdoors in Worcester

that Sunday. It was an experience we won't soon forget!

Earth-Care Event – “Low-Carbon” Cooking Workshop

Please save Sundya, April 11, for an afternoon of exploring low-waste, frugal, vegetarian cooking in a fun and family-friendly atmosphere in the kitchen at Edwards Church, 1:30-4 p.m. Bring a freezer-safe container and leave with some tasty samples. If you can't make it, look for samples of our efforts at the recycling day on April 24. Sign-up information and more details to follow!

Stewards

By Jean Burr

Spruce up the church

Please put the first two Saturdays in April (the 3rd & 10th) on your calendar to help us spruce up the church building and grounds for Easter and for the April 17 seminar. We will begin at 9:00 and remain as long as there is energy.

- If you are able to help in the yard, please bring your rakes, gloves, leaf blower, and whatever else you can think would be helpful.
- If you consider yourselves a handyman (woman), bring your tools for small carpentry jobs.
- The furniture in the fellowship hall needs a tune-up, so maybe you would like to help stain it.
- Others who prefer to work inside, will also be able to help

make our church home welcoming and friendly for these two events.

We will have coffee and some goodies for you, but please bring your own sandwich, salad, or whatever you would like to eat for lunch. Remember, many hands make light work—enough hands and maybe we can cancel the second session on the 10th.

Emergency exits

We've been discussing guidelines for emergency exits from the building, with special attention to that of our children during worship on Sunday mornings. Stay tuned for updated information and then . . . be ready for the drill (date not to be announced).

Pastor's Note

Continued from page three

Say it out loud. When you have a sentence or two that sounds good to you, sent it to me, or say it to someone else and see what it sounds like to that person. When you pray for Grace Church (and you are praying for Grace Church, aren't you?) include your sentence in your prayers. Let me know how it goes. (That's what pastors are for!)

The second suggestion is that you make room for the voices of other people. This is particularly important for people whose thoughts you don't know. Start with someone you like with whom you haven't worked on a project lately. Ask the person how their Grace Church experience is going. What is their favorite moment in recent years? What part of the Grace Church experience are they looking forward to in the next year or two? Are they waiting for something, some finish line on which to

Continued on page six

Help for Haiti

Through the personal generosity of you and an additional amount from the mission budget, Grace contributed \$2,000. to the Haiti relief effort. This went to the Eritaj Foundation through Mirlande Butler. Also, over 60 health kits were assembled and sent to Church World Service for distribution in Haiti. There is a thank you note on the bulletin board from Mirlande.

By Ruth Carney

People of Grace,
Welcome to Spring!

The season of Lent is almost over. Lent is a season of repentance. But for many of us, "repentance" is an offensive word. It sounds so remorseful. In reality, it isn't remorseful at all. The root word for "repentance" is the Greek word *metanoia*, from which our word "metamorphosis" comes. The great image of this is the butterfly emerging from its cocoon; the caterpillar being transformed into new life. No one is remorseful about that! Nor should we be with repentance, which involves leaving the past and emerging into new life.

In a very short period of time, Holy Week will begin with Palm Sunday and end with Easter!

Palm Sunday, March 28 10:00 AM Service

We will greet the morn with loud Hosannas moving from Jesus' jubilant entry into Jerusalem and journey to the Passion of Christ. We will celebrate and receive our palms. The Easter plants for our shut-ins will be available for the Buddies to pick up.

Maundy Thursday, April 1 7:00 PM Service

What is Maundy Thursday, the Thursday of Holy Week all about? The word "Maundy" is a shortened version of the Latin word *mandatum*, which means commandment. At the Last Supper, Jesus gave his friends a new commandment. He told the disciples, "I give you a new com-

mandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another" (John 13:34, NRSV). As Jesus commanded, we should make a special effort to exhibit our love and respect for one another. We will gather for worship at 7 PM and celebrate communion together. The service will end with the readings of *Tenebrae* and darkness.

Community Good Friday Service, April 2

12:00 Noon

This year's service will be at Edward's Church (off of Elm St.). Pastor Brad will be one of the participants.

Easter Sunday, April 4 10:00 AM Service

Our Alleluias have returned to worship! (We put away our Alleluias on February 17, 2010.) We will joyously celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ! We will sing, hear the "good news" and celebrate communion together.

Flowers

If you would like to provide flowers for the altar, please be in touch with Ruth Carney. You may bring flowers or if you wish to have her order flowers from our florist, the current price is \$35.00.



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. God is with us and among us. God does and will provide.

May you always feel God's blessings,

Deacons

Ruth Carney, Karolyne White



The Book Club's
next meeting will be
March 24.

Grace Congregational, UCC

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www.macucc.org (Mass Conf.)
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Music Director: Susan Minor
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Missionary in Indonesia:
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Styrofoam Collection Day

Saturday, April 24

Celebrate Earth Day (2 days late) on Saturday, April 24 at our 3rd styrofoam collection day. The truck will be here from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. and our younger recyclers will help us fill it up! (Please remember to remove any tape, labels and food particles from your styrofoam.) Packing peanuts will be given to our local UPS store where they get reused.



Refoamit will process all the other styrofoam and, eventually, it will be used in other products, keeping it out of our landfill.

An added attraction that day will be some surprise, healthy, but good, snacks made by the Grace/Edwards Earthcare team!

Not recycled, but new, gorgeous May Baskets will also be available on the 24th by the crafters from Grace Women United. Let's hope for beautiful weather so that we may be able to use the May pole outside on which to display the baskets.

Help to spread the word about the 24th. Bring your neighbors and friends!

Three Bs for March 28

Next Sunday (Palm Sunday), Grace Women United will host their annual bread & bake sale. This year, all proceeds will be given to the Appalachia Project, which has, for over twelve years, been the work of Anke & Frits Geursten of Holliston. They have "adopted" 11 schools in that area to which they send care packages of children's books, art and school supplies, sneakers & socks.

Because they ship weekly, the costs are tremendous so anything we can do to help is very much appreciated. Those of us who were at our last meeting were privileged to meet and talk with Anke and were amazed at her story of the needs of the children there, Three Bs? Hopefully you will consider all three-- if not, do what you can to help:

1. Bake bread, cookies, cakes, whatever you do best!
2. Bring your baking, wallet, gently used children's books, sneakers, new art & school supplies & socks.
3. Buy some of the goodies

Grace Church people always find a way to make a difference in the lives of those who are in need. Here is a great opportunity to do so again!

Pastor's Note

Continued from page three

focus?

Pick up the phone. Go have lunch with somebody. Meet up for a walk at Tercentennial Park!

There is another part of this second suggestion. Once you've made room for the voices of other people, let yourself be influenced by what you heard. If what someone else says doesn't influence you, then I gently suggest you have not listened with an open heart (or an open mind.) One statement I feel bold to say is, "God might be leading us to engage each other and the world with an open heart, ready to be changed by what we hear, see, experience, find, etc." I've tried saying that out loud and I'll try it later today, following my own suggestion!

The one who wrote the Letter to the Hebrews, quoted above, wasn't really encouraging us to run a race, right? This voice from the past was trying to say that there is a particular way, a particular set of challenges, a particular group of tasks that fall to each of us in our diverse lives. This is a great call to draw upon the strength of "the cloud of witnesses," both the dead and the living. This is a call to "get in the game." And so, as the weather teases us with fine days in March, I wish you success with my suggestions. I urge you to be unafraid. I trust that you will succeed if you try. And should you need a focus point, a goal, a finish line, then, like the writer says, look to Jesus!

Peace and Blessing,
Pastor Brad

An Essay About Grace Church

By Linda Hilliard

In last month's *Grace Notes*, we were invited to write an essay about Grace Church. I decided to do my essay using the outline questions that were given to us:

What is it about Grace Church that feeds you?

That's easy - it's all of you: the Grace Church family. I am fed by those of you I see almost every Sunday - and those I see in church only occasionally. You feed me because you are all part of the history of our church- and my history. Without Grace Church and its members, my life would be different - less complete. Well - okay perhaps I would have had a little more free time over the years without so many church commitments, but my time with Grace and with all of you has been time well spent.

Why have you stayed with our church?

The quick answer to that question is "habit," but that's not fair. I've stayed because Grace Church has helped me to become who I am as a person. I've stayed with Grace because it is an integral part of my life - without Grace, my life would be diminished somewhat.

What makes you proud of Grace Church and its members?

As a religious community, we have amazing strength. We have been through so much in our history. We have stood together against terrible adversity and we have stayed strong - very strong. As a community - we can look in any mirror at ourselves and say "'well done!"

When you speak of Grace to others, what do you say?

I am boastful about many aspects of Grace. I speak of our warmth, our welcoming nature and our outreach programs. I talk about Sunday services, which are a little less traditional - and yet so enriching. I tend to describe Grace with that too often used phrase: "We are small, but mighty." And I tell people about how we support one

another's ideas and interests and how we genuinely care about each other.

What is it that nourishes your life here?

I am nourished by our Sunday morning services and by the intimacy of worshiping together each week. I am nourished by working with my church friends on big projects (dare I say Holiday Fair) and little activities (yes, even vacuuming the worship space). I am nourished by the conversations we share and I am nourished by the commitment I see in all of us when it comes to trying to do the best for our church and our congregation.

What about Grace feels like the presence of God?

I feel the presence of God when we speak openly and from the heart to one another. That happens on Sunday mornings - often when Brad asks us to personally respond to a question about ourselves and our relationship with God. I also find God in smaller gatherings. We sometimes have differences of opinions (that's only normal). But I feel God among us in our differences and in our agreements. And we all have felt God's presence on our journey together these past few years. Knowing that God is with us has been part of our strength as a community.

Coffee and ????

Have you noticed that, lately, coffee hour has offered healthy snacks along with occasional sweets?



After a possible "sugar high" on Valentine's Day, a change went into effect. This doesn't mean that desserts aren't welcome, of course, but those who sign up for taking the responsibility for coffee hour, needn't worry about what to bring.

It's a good idea to check on the cream, but otherwise, everything should be on hand in the kitchenette.

Please sign up for a Sunday, or two, on the sheet in the fellowship hall. If you don't know what you are supposed to do, check with someone you see doing it! It's easy!