

GRACE NOTES

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

Congregational Meeting on January 29

As moderator, I am calling a congregational meeting to be held on Sunday, January 29, 2012 to convene immediately following the worship service at approximately 11:15 am. Child care and snacks will be provided.

Our primary agenda item is the 2012 budget. You will have the opportunity to hear an overview of the larger financial picture of the church, the church's operating budget, both revenue and expenses. Also on the agenda will be an update on the work of the Leadership Ministry Team in reviewing options for the future of the church given the barriers to expanding the worship space at our current location.

Please make every effort to attend worship and the congregational meeting on January 29. Be a part of the future of Grace Church.

Linda Dunbrack

Five Special Sundays in January

January brings us five Sundays and we have something special happening on every one of them:

- January 1, a Lay-led Service with guest musician, Roy Helander (hope you were able to be at the service).
- January 8, a joint Epiphany Service with our sisters and brothers from Edwards and Plymouth Churches. This year the service will be at Edwards at 10:00 AM.
- January 15, a Blue Jean Sunday / De-greening of the Church. Please wear comfortable clothes to church and stay to un-decorate the church and put all those Advent and Christmas items away. There will be something for everyone to do, no matter what your age or physical abilities.
- January 22, trip to Worcester Fellowship after worship.
- January 29, Congregational Meeting after worship.

Bad Weather?

If Grace Needs to Close Due to Inclement Weather . . .

If it's stormy weather and you are unsure about venturing out, you can determine whether Grace Church is open by going to WCVB-TV, Channel 5. The station will include Grace services or events in its cancellations listing.

If your power is off and the television doesn't work, call Senior Deacon Ruth Carney to determine whether church is open (assuming you have a working cell phone).



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*Ruth Carney
Deacons*

Dear Ones,

When we travel “home for the holidays,” we do so for lots of reasons. When we choose not to go home or there is no longer a home to go to at the holidays, that has great meaning in our lives too.

Do you remember your Genesis? In Genesis chapter 3, “therefore the Lord God sent [Adam and Eve] forth from the garden of Eden.” We, represented in the story by Adam and Eve, are sent away from home at the beginning of the Bible epic. When I read this text, God doesn’t seem all that angry. I think God is disappointed - even heart-broken - that the acts of the humans have the consequence that they must leave the home God prepared for them. They have to leave because of what they did.

Later in Genesis, chapter 12, God speaks to Abram. God promises that Abram is going to be the start of something wonderful, in “the land that I will show you.” God’s promise is that Abram (Abraham) will come home. This is God’s idea! Nothing that Abraham has done so far in the story triggers this promise. Abraham and Sarah move on in their grand adventure because God initiated the adventure.

God understands that coming home is more than the fulfillment of a nostalgic hope for a lost time when things were simpler, warmer, more welcoming. God’s idea of coming home is that we answer a call to a new place, a changed reality, in which we will be surprised to discover that we fit in ways we had not fully imagined. We will discover that we have come home, that our spiritual and other gifts are newly valued, that giving up our former trajectory through life is the most liberated thing we’ve ever done. (And we can turn toward God’s invitation to come home again and again!)

That is what change is about. That is what our inventive God is up to in our lives, yours

and mine. That is how you can calm down in the face of new family combinations, new friendships, and new rituals. That is how you can be the person you are in 2011-2012, not merely a shadow of who you were back in the day.

In these days of our 2011-2012 Christmas-tide, I urge you to claim this understanding of Christmas. In the Christmas story, what happens? A baby is born, that’s all. Oh wait. That’s not all. In our story, God takes an action. God comes to us “in the flesh,” in the presence of a baby. God demonstrates that God is with us.

God is saying to us, “Where you are at home, there I am at home with you.”

May you find your moments of home in closeness to God who longs to be so close to you that you feel right at home.

*Peace and Blessing,
Pastor Brad*

Thank you from Ruth Bodge

It is hard to put into words how I feel about the people of Grace Congregational Church, UCC. Grace is the second church in my life that I joined on my own. This happened shortly after my husband, Everett, died. I am eternally grateful for all the support and friendship I received then and through all the years I have been a part of Grace. All of you have been such an important part of my life and I am forever grateful that God led me to Grace. Thank you.

*God Bless,
Ruth Bodge*

Ruth’s new address is:

Ruth Bodge
1437 Belmont Street
Manchester, NH 03104
603-666-9981

Worcester Fellowship – Multi-Age Worship and Service Trip – Jan. 22nd

Please consider joining us for a special service and worship trip to the Worcester Common on Sunday, January 22nd. We will car-pool from Grace after church, leaving by 11:30 a.m., serve lunch and worship in Worcester with the ministry on the Common, returning to Grace by about 3:00 p.m.

Children are welcome with parents or chaperones; see Mary Memmott or speak to Pastor Brad for details.

See related article about the sock collection on page five.

Styrofoam Collection is January 7; Volunteers Needed

Our January Styrofoam/plastic tableware collection is coming up on Saturday, the 7th of January. If you are able to help out for an hour or two to give some of us a break during the day, please let us know.



We will also be collecting food that day for the Hope Food Pantry to help refill their shelves which are usually somewhat bare following the holidays.

Refer questions to Jean Burr.

January Calendar

January 1

Carol and Cookies

Bring socks for Worcester Fellowship

10:00 AM Worship

January 7

8:00 AM Men's Group

10:00 AM Styrofoam Collection

January 8

Season of Sharing - Edwards Church

Rev. Jim Antal, our Massachusetts

UCC Conference minister will be preaching

10:00 AM Worship

Bring socks for Worcester Fellowship

January 11

11:30 AM GWU Meeting

January 15

Bring socks for Worcester Fellowship

Intergenerational Service

9:00 AM Singers

10:00 AM Worship

11:30 AM Blue Jean Sunday

January 18

7:30 PM Stewards meeting

January 22

Bring socks and sandwich supplies for Worcester Fellowship

9:00 AM Singers

10:00 AM Worship

10:00 AM Children making sandwiches for Fellowship trip

11:30 AM Field trip to Worcester Fellowship

January 25

10:00 AM Book Club meeting

January 29

9:00 AM Singers

10:00 AM Worship

11:15 AM Congregational Meeting



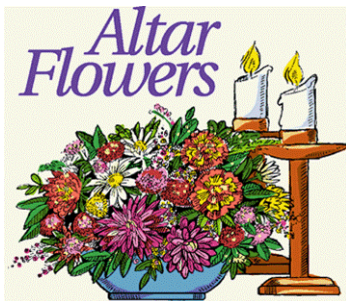
Grace Women United

GWU will have a meeting on Wednesday January 11th at 11:30 AM Please bring your bag lunch.

Book Club



Book Club will meet on Wednesday, January 25 at 10AM. We will discuss whatever books have been read by each of us during December.



Altar 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.

Stewards

Most of our last meeting was spent discussing the upcoming proposed budget for 2012. At the present time, our pledges are a bit higher than this current year (Yay!!) and we urge all who plan to make one but have not yet submitted it, to please do so. Also, any member, or team, who would like an item included in the expected expenses for next year, is also urged to let the Stewards know soon so we may present an accurate picture of our financial situation at the annual meeting in January.

Thanks to all who helped to make the mini Christmas fair a success. Many people were

able to purchase goodies and gifts, and a total of \$252. was realized. (Not including that which was received for the sale of house pins.)

We are still hoping that someone will offer to complete the Safe Serve online course in order to meet the regulations set by the Board of Health in Framingham. As stated previously, Grace Women United is willing to cover any expense involved for doing this. If interested, contact Jean Burr or Karolyne White.

Jean Burr

Those who attended the
Reminder: Please return your Stewardship Campaign Pledge Cards!

Faith in Action

December production of "The Case of the Show Stopping Nun-Nabber" enjoyed a great dinner and much laughter. We're not sure if the biggest laughs were from the script, or from the great(?) performance of the cast. However, the purpose of the evening was to have some fun and in that respect, it was extremely successful. As Daleen, the director, has said on many occasions, "Now you know why we are called 'The



Not Ready for Anytime Players'. Thanks to all who were involved in providing the evening's entertainment and dinner. Rumor has it that an invitation will be coming to all to attend a pot luck supper and a DVD showing of the performance in the near future. Watch the calendar for a date!

Jean Burr

Christian Education

Christian Ed would like to thank everyone for their enthusiastic involvement in worship planning and creation during the Advent season. Thanks especially to Susan Minor, Brad, Linda Dunbrack, Ruth Carney, Terri Taylor and everyone else who helped to make Advent and the Christmas Eve service so memorable and totally enjoyable. It is such a pleasure worshipping with such a creative and enthusiastic group. The intergenerational worship services have involved folks of all ages in many wonderful ways and in doing so helped to weave our diverse community together.



classes in January, the first Sunday is intergenerational “carols and cookies” service. Jan. 8 we will celebrate the Epiphany at Edwards Church in Saxonville. Back at Grace Church on Jan. 15, we will begin as intergenerational service, but after the sign of peace, the children will proceed upstairs for Sunday School. Ronda Yeomans is teaching and is seeking an adult helper to meet our “Safe Sanctuaries” commitment.

Mary Memmott is leading our CE field trip to the Worcester Fellowship on Jan. 22. The children will be upstairs in the kitchen making sandwiches during worship and will leave for Worcester soon after. Mary is seeking lunch food donations and adult chaperones

for the trip since Worcester Fellowship has a requirement regarding child/ adult visitor ratio. Please see Mary for details.

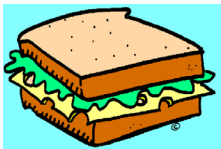
Beginning on Jan. 29 we will have Sunday School on days when people sign up to teach or to assist. Right now the schedule is open for Jan. 29, Feb., and March. Please sign up with Mary as soon as you know your schedule. Teachers may choose either the Come Join the Circle curriculum or the weekly liturgical readings available at www.textweek.org. Specific social justice issues are also appropriate Sunday School topics. Please see Pastor Brad to discuss ideas. Thank you for your support.

Ronda Yeomans

Regarding Sunday School

Missions

“Cans for Communion” will Return in February - in January we Seek Socks and Sandwich Supplies



We will collect cans again next month - this

month we are asking all to help us collect food for lunch with Worcester Fellowship on January 22nd as well as new men’s white athletic socks. New men’s socks have been especially requested by Worcester Fellowship and we have set a goal of trying to collect 200 pairs - can you

help us reach it? Worcester Fellowship is an outdoor ministry “dedicated to ending isolation through spiritual care and community.” We will join them for lunch and worship on Sunday, January 22nd.



They typically pass out over 100 bag lunches on a Sunday afternoon, and we have committed to providing 60 on this Sunday. If you can’t come with us, or even if you can, please consider supporting this ministry by providing bread, sandwich

fixings (deli meat, peanut butter, or cheese, no mayo-based fillings please), paper bags, sandwich bags, soft granola bars, juice boxes, or easy-to-eat fruit. Our Sunday school members will assemble the sandwiches during worship on Jan. 22nd, but adult helpers are also needed and welcome. We will have a sign-up list at church for helpers and supplies in the fellowship hall, or email Mary Memmott (memmottm@gmail.com) to find out what is still needed.

Mary Memmott

Deacons

People of Grace,

We hope your Christmas brought you many happy memories!

Please see page one for a listing of worship services for the five Sundays in January.

Everyone seems to have at least one resolution that seems impossible to keep. And that can become very discouraging. Do you have a resolution that you never have been able to keep? How about thinking outside the box? How about a word that describes a vision or a characteristic? Perhaps: “less is more” “hope” “persevere” “encourage” “deepening of faith” - the possibilities are endless.

The prophet Jeremiah, who had his own reasons to feel down, wrote, “The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:22-23, NRSV).

God refuses to give up on us. When we lose hope, when we fail and fall short, God’s mercy never runs out. Tomorrow is full of promise and our God’s unceasing love.

*May the New Year bring us:
Enough happiness to
keep us sweet;
Enough trials to
keep us strong;
Enough hope to keep us lively;
Enough sorrows to keep us
dependent upon God;
Enough failure to
keep us humble;*

*Enough success to
keep us eager;
Enough friends to
give us comfort;
Enough wealth to
meet our needs;
Enough enthusiasm to
keep us looking forward;
Enough faith to
overcome despair;
And enough determination to
use every day and situation
somehow for good.*

To all the People of Grace, thank you for all you do for our church! You see something that needs attention and you take care of it. You are asked to participate and you say: yes! There are many things that get done “behind the scenes” and, consequently, no one says thank you. Here is your “thank you.” Without our wonderful, dedicated, devoted congregation, we would not be able to do the work God calls us to do. Is there someone in your life you need to thank? There is no better time than now.

If we need to cancel worship or any other event for weather related reasons, we are listed on The Boston Channel, so tune to WCRB Channel 5 for the listing.

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.

*A New Year’s Blessing
May God make your year a
happy one!
Not by shielding you from all
sorrow and pain,
But by strengthening you to
bear it as it comes;
Not by making your path easy,
But by making you sturdy to
travel any path;
Not by taking hardships
from you,
But by taking fear from
your heart;
Not by granting you
unbroken sunshine,
But by keeping your face
bright, even in the shadows;
Not by making your life
always pleasant,
But by showing you when
people and their causes
need you most,
and by making you anxious
to be there to help.
God’s love, peace, hope and
joy to you for the year ahead.*

*May you always
feel God’s blessings,
Ruth Carney
Deacon Ruth Carney &
Karolyne White*

Grace Congregational, UCC

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