

GRACE NOTES

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

Redevelopment Search Process

Your Search Team is well into the process of interviewing candidates for our new Redevelopment Pastor. We have met as a group and have gone over the profiles given to us by the Central Area Office of the Massachusetts Conference and have set up

interviews with each of the candidates.

By the time you receive this issue of *Grace Notes*, we may have already had first interviews with each candidate. If one or all of the candidates seem to be a good match for us, we will, as a group, go to hear them preach. Meaningful worship is so important to our congregation that this is a vital step in the process. We then will schedule a second interview with those whom we feel would be a good match for our congregation. We are not able to discuss the details with the congregation due to the confidential nature of the profiles, but we will keep you updated on the progress of the search.

Search Team: Clair Ball, Ruth Carney, Glenn Colpitts, Jon Ellis, Linda Hilliard, Judy Sebastian, Brian Winsor

Our Lenten focus

In my time with you, I have always tried to do as St. Paul teaches and "speak the truth in love." Sometimes, that has made you angry. Sometimes, it has made you happy. All the time, it has been intended to make you think.

As I prepare for Lent as a season of healing, I run the same risk. Some of you are probably thinking, "Healing? Healing from what? Everything is fine." But while that may be true for you, there are people in the congregation who are broken in body, mind and spirit. Maybe it's a personal brokenness that needs friendship and care. Maybe it's physical brokenness which longs for prayer and reassurance, and the strength to go on; Perhaps it is people who feel they have been hurt and disillusioned by the church, or those who have lost trust in the congregation of which they are a part. But whatever the brokenness, it has to be said that as long as one of you is broken, the community of the church cannot be whole. As long as distrust and fear exist among you, the community is not "one." As long as there is even one individual in your midst who feels lost or helpless or unloved, you

Continued on page two

You're invited to a Central Council Open House

After church on Sunday, March 5 and April 2, the Central Council will have informal "open house" conversations. We'll circle our chairs in a corner of Emrich Hall and all are welcome to join us for a chat. There'll be no formal agenda - this is simply a chance to ask questions, get updates, provide feedback/suggestions.



Grace Notes

Volume 8, Number 3

March 2006

❖ Pastor's paragraph.....2	❖ Leadership training.....6
❖ New task teams forming.....3	❖ Web page.....7
❖ Construction update.....3	❖ Financial update.....7
❖ Ministry teams.....4-6	❖ World Day of Prayer.....8

Taking time to say a good goodbye

When we do not take the time to say goodbye and say goodbye well, with honesty and love, it is much harder for us to move on and embrace the life ahead.

Let us know that we move forward carrying each other in our hearts.

Dear Friends,
When my mother was dying 20 years ago, she was sick for just ten months before the end. Only over the last few months did we know that she would not survive the cancer that was ravaging her body, but a few months was enough. A few months was enough to tell her how much we loved her, to thank her for what she had meant to our lives, to say the things we and she had never said but always knew we should. A few months was enough to tell her how much we would miss her. It was enough for a healthy Goodbye.

Those in my family who were able to make themselves go through this process of a good goodbye, were then able to handle the grief we felt after Mom died, but those who put denial up like a wall around their hearts truly missed the opportunity of a lifetime, of my Mom's lifetime. They missed the chance to say "I love you" one last time. They cast off the privilege of walking with her through those last weeks and days. They didn't get a final hug or to have the joy of hearing what Mom had to say to them. For those individuals, moving forward after Mom died was a much more difficult task, and in fact, in my father's case, he never did quite move on from that June morning when the sun was shining and the birds were singing and my mother

stopped breathing. He lived the rest of his life in an abyss of grief which made him helpless, which gave way to the Alzheimer's disease which finally took his life three years ago.

When we do not take the time to say goodbye and say goodbye well, with honesty and love, it is much harder for us to move on and embrace the life ahead.

You and I have been on an incredible journey together over these past two years. We have laughed and cried, we have anguished and been exasperated with each other and with God; we have watched old friends fall away and new friends arrive; we have fought for the life of Grace Church until we have wondered whether we have any "fight" left in us, but we have also held each other up, and put one foot in front of the other and moved forward. I honestly don't know the specifics of the future into which you are moving, but I do know you have done good work and continue to struggle in the way which God is calling you, and if effort counts for anything, your future will be blessed.

My friends, let us take the next 8 weeks or so to say a "Good Goodbye." Let us reflect on what our time together has meant to each of us and let us express that to one another in whatever way we can. Let us know that we move forward carrying each other in our hearts.

Our formal goodbye will take place on Sunday, April 23. You are all invited to come that day not just to celebrate my ministry among you, but to celebrate your own ministry while I have been in your midst, for truly, you have come a long way in so many ways and there is much to celebrate!

*Let There Be Peace,
Reverend Gretchen.*

Reverend Gretchen

Lenten focus

Continued from page one

are not living as Christ calls you to live.

In that Spirit, we will spend Lent, beginning with Ash Wednesday, exploring healing in the biblical context and what wholeness means for peace and unity and compassion in our lives and in the congregation.

Please join me for this time of Lenten Healing on Ash Wednesday at 7:30 PM and on the Sundays following. I believe you'll be glad you did!

This and That

Grace Church March Calendar

2 - Women's Lectio

3 - Fireside Chat

5 - Family Worship
Can for Communion
CC Open House

7 - Central Council

12 - Worship

15 - Ministry Team
Night

19 - Worship

26 - Worship

Please step up and help

The January 15 congregational conversation produced a bounty of feedback on the congregation's vision for Grace's future. Now it's time to turn that information into action plans.

This past Sunday, members had an opportunity to sign up for one (or several) of five task teams that will address the subjects of:

- Christian Education
- Church Governance
- Mission/Vision (i.e., purpose)
- Music
- Worship

(The Redevelopment Minister topic is being addressed separately by the Search Committee.)

The Central Council wants to get on a fast track with action plans and is asking teams to have their first meetings (and produce a broad brush plan) as soon as possible.

For many of these teams, the initial task will be research and definition (e.g., within worship and music, find out members' perception of traditional versus contemporary).

If you missed the sign up - but want to join a team, contact Linda Hilliard and she will let you know when your team is meeting. Generally, these task teams will be a relatively short-term commitment (meet once or twice a month for up to three months).

Construction/Move Update



- Construction status - The Construction Team is continuing to meet with Chris Walsh, the architect. Chris has refined the architectural designs and the contractor is coming in with final pricing.

- Chris Walsh Architects will go before the Framingham Planning Board with the designs on Tuesday, February 28. Although this is a standard meeting, it never hurts to have the church represented. Feel free to attend this meeting at the Memorial Building (room location and time to be determined)

- Schedule: Although we are still on schedule as far as beginning construction this spring, all of the contractors have agreed that our new building will take at least six months to complete. This takes us several months beyond the anticipated move on June 30. We are currently negotiating with New Life to stay a bit longer while our new home is completed.

- Good News! Some of the pipes from the Grace pipe organ will be bringing joy to other congrega-

tions in New England. Isn't it a wonderful thought that we will be sharing Grace's history of beautiful music with others? Alan Taylor, who worked on this organ in the 1970s, will be removing the pipes from the Union Ave. sanctuary in mid March and using some for repairs, tossing others.

We thoroughly pursued selling the organ as a unit. However, there are a large number of pipe organs on the market - and none are selling. In fact, some church buildings have been razed with the old organs going down with the building.

So, with the projected cost of removing the pipes estimated at upwards of \$20,000, we have reached an agreement with Mr. Taylor. He will remove the pipes at no cost to us and in exchange, he will use any still viable pipes for his repair and renovation work on multiple existing pipe organs. So, our music extends around New England and more importantly, into the future!

Ministry Teams

CEMT

Laura Buck
Joanne Larkins
Clair Ball
Daleen Perkins
Lynn Rodriguez
Ronda Yeomans
Rev. Donna Tetreault,
CE Minister

The youth event tentatively scheduled for March has been cancelled due to scheduling conflicts. An event is being investigated for the spring that might also include middle school youth. Look to the bulletin for additional information when it becomes available!

Stewards

Dianne Belloli, chair
Lynn Burdett
Frank Carney
Judy Sebastian
Tim Taylor

Christian Education

Resource Open House on Wed., March 29

All interested church members are invited to the MACUCC Resource Ministries Open House on Wednesday, March 29 at Edwards House (UCC Conference Center) in Framingham. Come anytime from 10am-7pm. Lunch and dinner foods will be available as well as refreshments .

What can you expect?

- Information about curricula: Seasons of the Spirit, Bible Quest and others.
- Sale of children's books with ideas on using them in your program.
- A Bibles display and tips on how to select bibles for different age groups.
- Adult study resources.
- Sunday School Summer programs .
- Family Ministry programming ideas.
- Opportunity to purchase gifts for grads and confirmands.
- Learn how you can set up interesting

worship centers for your classrooms, committee meetings, Bible studies and other settings.

- Surprise display of actual Biblical artifacts; learn how you can borrow this display for your local church.
- Network with other educators.

Schedule for the day:

No need to sign up, but ensure materials and food, contact Martha Cook at 508-875-5233 or cookm@macucc.org.

10 am: Coffee

11am-12 Rotation format, hosted by Carl McDonald

2-3pm Family Ministry Resource Sharing, hosted by Martha Butler Cook

4-5pm Youth Ministry Forum, hosted by Carl McDonald

6-7pm Teacher Recruitment Ideas, hosted by Elsa Marshall

Stewards

• The Stewards were racking their brains to figure out ways to save money and realized that the faxes we receive in the church office are mostly travel advertisements and other junk mail. The Stewards decided to remove the fax line. We receive most of our correspondence via snail mail or e-mail so it made sense to remove that line.

There is a fax at the church now, but not a dedicated line. So if you need to send a fax to the church, call ahead so the fax machine can be switched to the phone line.

• The Stewards are looking into getting a postage meter for the church as opposed to the bulk mailing fee that we have to pay each year. Watch for an update.

• The Stewards would like the Ministry Teams to notify the them - in advance - of any expenses that are over \$100. We are trying to keep a handle on the budget and don't want any surprises.

• Grace Church members are being asked to voluntarily pay their Mass Conference denominational dues (approx. \$16.00 annually). Some members may not be able to afford this amount. However, for others who could help by paying their own dues, perhaps you would even be willing to round up your contribution to help cover the membership dues for someone else. Please make your check out to Grace Church and write "Conference Dues" on the memo line.

Ministry Teams

Deacons

Ruth Carney, co-chair
Jon Ellis, co-chair
Glenn Colpitts
Melissa Ellis
Brian Winsor



Fireside Chat Friday evening, March 3rd

Come join in an evening of fellowship and spirit. We will be meeting at the home of Linda Hilliard, 15 Westgate Road, Framingham from 7:30 - 9:00 pm (weather permitting :-)) If you need directions, call Linda at 508-879-5943.

Book Club

The Book Club meets the fourth Monday of the month. Refer questions about the book club to Lynn Burdett at 508-872 7863.



Deacons

Maundy Thursday Service

We will not have our traditional Maundy Thursday Service at Union Ave this year. The Deacons are asking each of you to pick another Christian church and go and experience their Maundy Thursday Service on April 13. We ask that you bring back to us what moved you (or not), what spoke to you (or not), what was especially important to you (or not). We want to know these things so when we plan our first Maundy Thursday Service in our new worship home, we can use what is meaningful and special to our congregation.

Ash Wednesday Service

We will have our Ash Wednesday Service at Union Ave on March 1, 2006 at 7:30 PM. This communion service begins the Season of Lent which will focus on a "Time of Healing."

Celebrate Pastor Gretchen's ministry

We want you to mark your calendars now for April 23, 2006 where we will *celebrate* Pastor Gretchen's ministry with us. We will honor her ministry in worship followed by a reception as we bid our farewells to her and wish her well in her future ministries.

Leadership Training

We also encourage everyone to participate in Pastor Gretchen's Leadership Training. Our first one was February 19th with another one coming up in March and in April. These sessions are for the congregation. You do not need to be in any kind of leadership role at the present time to participate. You may find that you can take many parts of the training into your everyday life.

Thank you

We also want to thank everyone who has hosted our coffee time after worship. We especially want to thank **Marilyn Durgin** for all her time and effort organizing this for all these months. As Marilyn moves on to other things, we want to acknowledge and thank her. **Grace Women United** has been scheduling the coffee for the time being and we need someone to help schedule volunteers to host our coffee time after worship. If you would be willing to do this, please speak to one of the Deacons.

We also want to thank **Janet Cadillac and Gloria Sadler** for their ministry in Parish Visitation. Janet and Gloria have decided to "retire" and we want them to know how much we appreciate all they have been and done for Grace. We thank the **Mission Ministry Team** for organizing an "adopt a shut-in" program to help continue parish visitations.

As we take our next steps toward our new worship home, we continue to emphasize that we all need to be very flexible during this period of transition and work with and help each other. God is with us and among us. God will bring us through and we will be stronger and better for it. God does and will provide.

*May You Always Feel God's Blessings,
Deacon Ministry Team*

In case of snow

The church has registered with **WCVB Channel 5, the Boston Channel.** (We are just waiting for our access and ID codes.) In case of a future storm, tune into the closings on Channel 5 to see if Grace is listed (canceling worship or any event we are hosting).



Missions Team:
Mirlande Butler
Christine Collins
Eleanor Crawford,
Chair
Victoria Ellis
Mary Memmott

A reminder that all Grace Church Central Council and Ministry team meetings are open to anyone. Central Council meets the first Tuesday of the month; the other Ministry Teams meet the third Wednesday of the month.

First Sunday of the Month is "Cans for Communion"

The Missions Team will be collecting nonperishable food for the MetroWest Harvest Food Pantry in Framingham on the first Sunday of each month. For March 5, we are once again looking for JARS of PASTA SAUCE, but all donations of nonperishable food items are welcome. Please bring your donations to church with you on March 5. If you bring multiple cans or jars, please double-bag them. If you are interested in helping to deliver food to the pantry, please see Mary Memmott. Delivery duty involves picking up the food after church on Sunday, and delivering it to SMOC at 300 Howard Street the following Wednesday or Saturday morning. Last month we delivered 7 bags of food -- thank you all for making a difference!

One Great Hour of Sharing Collection Will be April 9, Palm Sunday

Looking ahead -- the theme for this year's One Great Hour of Sharing collection is water. Clean water scarcity is a problem in many, many parts of the world. The international missions supported by the United Church of Christ are working to change this, and you can join in the effort. Look for more details starting March 19. Envelopes will be available at church and in your April edition of Grace Notes.

Turning Point Shelter -- If You Can Boil Water, You can Help!

The Missions Team has had some great cooks bring dinner to Turning Point shelter over the past year, even without a kitchen at Grace. We are still "kitchenless" due to the need for New Life to conserve heat and electricity (and we can all relate to that!) - but we don't want to give up on our monthly commitment to bring dinner to Turning Point.



If you can volunteer to help cook dinner for 16-24 people on the third Friday of May, July, or August, please contact the Missions Team. Food can be delivered in disposable pans. No dessert, please, just a main dish and a salad or vegetable, and food can be dropped off any time before 7 p.m. that day. We'll give you complete directions when you sign up. If you want help finding a partner, we can match people up. Or if you'd like to volunteer your kitchen space, but need help cooking, shopping, or delivering, we can help with that also. Just let us know how you think you can help.

And thank you to our wonderful cooks who have already signed up for 2006: Circle 13 women's group, Daleen Perkins, Ronda Yeomans and Clair Ball, and Linda Hilliard.

Leadership Training followup

On Sunday afternoon, February 19, twenty of us gathered in Emrich Hall for the first of three monthly leadership events. We had a wonderfully energetic and open conversation about how to let others in our lives and congregation know that they are valued, loved and respected. We explored the concepts that all Christians have a ministry by virtue of our faith. We talked about listening well to each other and dealing responsibly and lovingly with conflict.

Special thanks to Larry Butler and Ellie Crawford for providing childcare during the training session.

The next Leadership Event will be held on Sunday, March 19 from 11:30AM - 1:30PM. The Focus for that workshop will be "Becoming a People who Lead: Responding vs. Reacting & Preparing vs. Planning".

We will examine our individual gifts for ministry and effective styles of "leading," whether you are a leader with a formal position or a church member who informally influences others. Please join us for this upcoming learning opportunity!

Prayer concerns

- Please keep Rob Lovewell in your prayers as he deals with health concerns.
- Keep Brent and Sue Jackson in your prayers as they deal with the failing health of their mother, Helen.

Women's Lectio to meet on March 2

The next Women's Lectio Group is March 2, Thursday, at 7:30 pm at the CS Reading Room. Also, the women's retreat this year will be June 9-10 at the St. Joseph Villa Retreat Center in Cohasset. More details to follow next month. For more information before then, please contact Laura Buck at 508-875-4781.

GWU/Circle 13
Rather than a regular meeting in March, plans are to go out to lunch and a movie on March 8.

All women are also invited to come to breakfast at Sunnyside Cafe in Ashland on Wednesday, March 15, beginning at 8:30AM. This is a pleasant way to start your day.

GWU will have its annual Bread Sale on Palm Sunday, April 9.

For more information, contact Lynn Burdett.

Tax Tips -

From Jean Burr

Tax Tips for filing your Massachusetts tax return:

- A new home heating deduction is now available for qualifying taxpayers allowing a reduction in taxable income for up to \$800 for home heating gas or oil purchased in November and December, 2005. (This will also be extended into 2006.)
- A tax credit is now available to homeowners for certain energy efficient heating items purchased between November, 2005 and March 31, 2006. Among qualifying purchases are insulation, windows and fuel efficient heating devices. This credit can reduce one's taxes by up to \$600.
- Don't need to file a MA return? Are you over 65 years old? You may be entitled to a circuit breaker credit (as much as \$840.) This can reduce any tax due, or put that much into your pocket but you must file in order to get it! Check it out!

The Seventh New England Regional Women's event – "Celebrate Micah's Call" – will be held at the Sheraton Burlington Hotel and Conference Center in Burlington, Vermont on March 17, 18, 19.

Several Grace Church women have expressed interest in carpooling to attend this 3-day weekend of spiritual renewal. It's \$95 (accommodations are separate)

For details, go to uccwomenscelebration.org. Contact Terri Taylor to join with others from Grace who plan on attending.

Grace Church web page about to go live!



The new Grace Church webpage is almost up and running. We're just waiting for a few more photos to be added - and we'll be good to go. In another week or so - check our www.gracechurchucc.org.

You can help – by sponsoring the webpage or the monthly updates for as little as \$30. If you like, you may even be listed on the page as a sponsor. Refer web page feedback to Linda Hilliard and send those sponsor checks to Nancy Brown!



Financial Update

2006
(as of 2/20/06)

2006 Pledges	\$67,524
Amount pledged 8 weeks	\$10,104
Amount received 8 weeks	\$7,862

Financial Secretary, Nancy H. Brown

World Day of Prayer on Friday March 3rd

World Day of Prayer is a worldwide movement of Christian women of many traditions who come together to observe a common day of prayer each year and who, in many countries, have a continuing relationship in prayer and service. The origins of World Day of Prayer date back to the 19th century when Christian women of the United States and Canada initiated a variety of cooperative activities in support of women's involvement in mission at home and in other parts of the world. The worship this year was developed by the women of South Africa. The theme for prayers is "Signs of the Times" and especially the devastation wreaked on Africa by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.



The service this year will be held at Edwards Church, starting at 10:30 (participants should arrive by 10). A luncheon is offered after the service. RSVP for the luncheon by Feb 28 to 508-877-2050. The luncheon will have a \$5 charge to defray costs and will include a few recipes (adapted) from Africa.

For those who would like additional information on the history of the World Day of Prayer, the website is: www.wdpusa.org

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