

GRACE NOTES

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

“Comedy for a Cause” Dinner Saturday, March 19th

Please join us for a special fund-raising dinner on Saturday, March 19th , 6-8 p.m. here at Grace.

The Sunday school students will cook (using Stearns Farm produce) and entertain with brief comedy sketches. There will be a free-will offering (suggested \$5/person) to help support our “Farm-to-Food-Pantry” program and pay for the Stearns Farm year-round share that goes mainly to those in need.

If you’d like to help cook, share a joke, or bring a dessert or appetizer to share, please sign up in the fellowship hall or see Mary Memmott.



Larger Space Project Update

The Larger Space Team is in the process of interviewing five architecture firms. We hope to choose architecture firm(s) for the feasibility / design phase within the next six weeks

For more information and ways to participate, contact Linda Dunbrack. Active Team Space Team members are Nancy Brown, Walter Brown, Frank Carney, Ruth Carney, Eleanor Crawford, Linda Dunbrack, Linda Hilliard, Brad Watters and Karolyne White

World Day of Prayer is March 4th

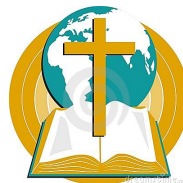
Wesley United Methodist Framingham, 7:00 pm

World Day of Prayer is a worldwide ecumenical movement of Christian women of many traditions who come together to observe a common day of prayer each year on the first Friday in March. For 2011, the WDP Committee of Chile developed the theme: How Many Loaves Have You?

Several Grace Church members are participating. Bring friends and families. Light refreshments will be served after the worship service.

The World Day of Prayer service will be held at Wesley United Methodist Church, 80 Beacon Street, Framingham, 7:00 pm.

For more information, contact Judy Sebastian.



Members asked to pay Denominational dues

The Grace Church Stewards are asking members to voluntarily pay their Mass Conference denominational dues. MACUCC dues are \$18.60 annually for each member of the congregation.

Please make your check out to Grace Church and write Conference Dues on the memo line.

Note: The \$18.60 figure covers individuals, not family units.

Each adult member of a family costs Grace for dues.

If possible, why not up your check yo \$25.00 to help defray the cost for another church member?

A collection will be taken next Sunday, March 6.

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“Money is Not the Problem”

Editor’s Note: *The following piece was written by Reverend Gretchen Switzer, former interim pastor at Grace Church. Gretchen and Linda Hilliard wrote a book entitled, Finishing with Grace A Guide to Selling, Merging or Closing Your Church. Out of that book has come a blog: www.finishingwithgrace.com. Each week, Gretchen and Linda alternate writing entries for the blog. When Pastor Brad saw Gretchen’s latest piece, he thought it was especially appropriate for the Grace community at this time. Enjoy!*

How many of us have said to our families: “If we just had ‘this much more money,’ then we could do ‘that’ and we would be happy.” How many of us have said similar things at church? “Oh, if we only had enough money to pay for a really good music director! If we had the money to repair this or add on to that, we’d be okay!”

I guess it’s part of the human condition to feel that we never have quite enough, but it leaves us, at home and in church, feeling that we are without resources, that our hands are tied when it comes to providing for the future. If we live with this mindset long enough we end up living out of what we perceive as poverty, rather than living with a sense of abundance. It makes us negative and feeling powerless. We slash the vastness of our dreams because all we can see are the obstacles before us, the closed doors and dwindling dollars. Our vision becomes tiny. Then, we are failing to live in the grand vision of our God.

I used to believe that not having enough money in the bank was the cause of the demise of

many congregations. Over the years, serving a variety of congregations, many of whom had limited financial resources, I have learned that it is not the dollars and cents that dictate a church’s potential, but the size of the congregation’s dreams. This is where we get stuck -- when we allow our visions and dreams to be limited by our own negativity and lack of faith.

I spent most of my pastoral career serving small to midsize churches who were worshipping in modest buildings with minimal professional “staff”, but recently, I have had the experience of visiting several churches who worship in huge facilities and have the funds to do just about anything they might want to do. Their presence in the world, however, is still dictated by the size and power of their dreams for the future. Their future will be dictated by their ability to look out beyond themselves. A congregation whose focus is only turned inward, and cares primarily about perpetuating itself, will eventually become a lifeless community, no matter how much money they have. While a community of faith with wonderful, broad overarching dreams for their ministry will probably find a way to make those dreams come true whether they have a huge bank account or not.

I think it’s time we stop letting money get in our way. Don’t you? We need to start creating outrageously profound visions based in our faith in God through whom “all things are possible.” We must stop focusing only on maintaining the “institution” and move toward tapping into the divine “inspiration” which will allow us to fulfill even our largest, most outrageously abundant, dreams for our churches.

Calendar - March

| | | |
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| March 4 | 7:00 PM | World Day of Prayer |
| March 5 | 8:00 AM | Men’s Group |
| March 6 | 9:00 AM | Singers |
| | 10:00 AM | Intergenerational Worship |
| March 9 | 11:30 AM | Grace Women United |
| March 13 | 9:00 AM | Singers |
| | 10:00 AM | Worship |
| | 10:00 AM | Sunday School |
| | 12:00 PM | Brunch after church |
| March 15 | 7:30 PM | Stewards meeting |

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| March 19 | 6:00 PM | Comedy Night |
| March 20 | 9:00 AM | Singers |
| | 10:00 AM | Worship |
| | 10:00 AM | Sunday School |
| March 23 | 10:00 AM | Book Club |
| March 25 | 7:00PM | Movie Night at Grace |
| March 27 | 9:00 AM | Singers |
| | 10:00 AM | Worship |
| | 10:00 AM | Sunday School |

Office Hours:
Wednesdays/Thursdays 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Brunch after church



Faith in Action is forming a new Brunch Club for one Sunday a month after church.

Our first outing will be on March 13 to Bella Costa at Framingham Junction. We'll meet there about noon (weather permitting). We'll decide future locations and dates after we have our first outing. Come along and join us; we'll ask for separate checks. Please

contact Jean Burr by the Wednesday before (March 9) if you plan to attend so we can give the restaurant a heads up.

All Church Yard Sale



FIA is planning an All Church (and Guests) Yard Sale on Saturday, May 14 (rain date May 21) from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Half of the income from the sale will go to the church's Larger Space Fund; the other half will go to the Metro West Outreach Connection (sponsors of the program - and walk - to prevent homelessness). As usual - church

members will be encouraged to donate items to the sale.

However, we are also going to rent tables (\$25 each) to those who would like to set up in our yard. Of course outside sellers would be required to bring their own tables and clean up after themselves.

Although this is NOT a rummage sale, we will have room available for clean, nearly new clothing. Begin spring by recycling those items which you could still wear, but don't quite fit your body (horrors) or your life style any more!

Donations may be brought to the church the week of May 9. Note: Since we want this to be an outside yard sale - any decision about postponing due to rain will be made by Thursday, May 12.



Styrofoam and May Baskets

Styrofoam Collection Day

...and Plastic Flatware that has been rinsed and packed in separate containers

Plus: Sale of May Baskets

Saturday, April 30 • 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM



Kitchen, Etc. Shower



Grace Women United is hosting a luncheon and "Kitchen, Etc." Shower after church on Sunday, April 10.

Our kitchens are getting a little bare of essentials, and as we look around, there are other needs as well. At the beginning of April, there will be a card display of what items we especially need. Please take a card and bring your "shower gifts" (unwrapped, but in a bag) on April 10. We'll have a light lunch, ooh and aah over our gifts - and restock!

And - yes - like a traditional shower - there will be some fun games.

Movie Night at Grace

On March 25 at 7:00PM, you're invited to Movie Night at Grace.

This month's movie is called *Fireproof*, starring Kirk Cameron. This is the story of Fire Captain Caleb Holt and his wife, Catherine. As the couple prepares to enter divorce proceedings, Caleb's father challenges his son to commit to a 40-day experiment: "The Love Dare." Caleb makes a life-changing commitment to love God. And with God's help, he begins to understand what it means to truly love his wife.

Because this film is about relationships, it may not be appropriate for younger viewers.

People of Grace,

We hope you are keeping safe and warm. Please do not take any unnecessary chances. You are important in the life of our church.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, March 9th. Come to the church at 7:00 PM where we will gather for an intimate service which will include imposition of ashes.

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. Please keep our congregation in your prayers. God is with us and among us! God does and will provide!

*May you always feel
God's blessings,
Ruth Carney*

*Deacons: Ruth Carney
Karolyne White*

If a service or event needs to be cancelled due to weather, tune to WCVB, Channel 5 Channel 5 for our cancellation listing.

The Lenten Journey begins on Ash Wednesday, March 9

40 days to spiritual health:

Lent is the 40 day period between Ash Wednesday and Easter. Traditionally, it has been a time when Christians re-examine their spiritual life and try to discern the quality of their relationship with God. There are many individual approaches to strengthening the spiritual life, including: choosing to fast or giving up favorite foods, praying more often, reading the Bible and devotional literature, engaging more often in public worship, serving God more intensely in the world. We miss the mark if we focus only on our desires. Lent ought to be a time of deeper dedication to God and seeking ways in which we can help to further God's kingdom on Earth.

The significance of Lent:

Lent commemorates Jesus' fast and temptation in the wilderness of Judea Province, which, according to the Gospel, lasted 40 days. Just as Jesus confronted his temptations during these 40 days, Lent helps Christians focus on our most basic need as sinners: forgiveness. The only way our Lord's forgiving power can become effective in our lives is by our taking the initiative to confront ourselves, be honest with ourselves and stop doing what is unhealthy and/or detrimental – whatever is keeping us from a closer relationship with God. Lent is a season of new beginnings.

Lent gave us:

A cross because Jesus carried one and was crucified on one.

A communion meal because Jesus shared one last supper with his disciples before he died and promised them that even if he couldn't be there with them, they would never be alone. They would see Jesus again and whenever they ate a meal like this one, they could always remember him.

A foot being washed because Jesus washed his disciples' feet showing them that nobody is better than anyone else and we should all help and serve each other.

Lent offers time for growth:

Many of us know our IQ (intelligence quotient), but what about our SQ (spiritual quotient)?

- Lent is a good time to think about the quality of your spiritual life. Do you think about God often ... or rarely? Do you pray often ... or occasionally? How well do you know the Bible? The Commandments? The Beatitudes? The lives of biblical heroes and heroines?
- During Lent, commit to spending more time in prayer. Also consider selecting a book of the Bible or a particular Bible character to study in-depth during this period. Some people give up particular items or habits during Lent. If used wisely, this discipline can help you abandon

Lenten Journey (continued)

things that have been interfering with your relationship with God. Seek out devotions and books that can help strengthen your spiritual life.

The color purple:

Many churches have purple paraments on the altar, lectern and pulpit. Many pastors and choir members wear purple stoles. Why purple?

In ancient times, purple garments were expensive and hard to find. The dye came from rare sea mollusks that had to be crushed to garner their purple fluid. (One ounce of purple dye required 250,000 mollusks!) Then the right kind of fabric had to be placed in the dye, dried and made into clothing, which was time-consuming. Generally, only wealthy people and members of royalty could afford purple garments. For example, in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man “was dressed in purple and fine linen” (Luke 16:19, NRSV).

Purple is used in church sanctuaries during Advent and Lent because Christ is revered as the King of Kings.

Repent

What pops into your mind when you hear the word “repent”? Is it a dark and somber word for you, perhaps reminding you of John the Baptist’s shouting for people to repent and be baptized?

What does the word “repent” mean anyway? Literally, it means to stop the way one is going, turn around, and then walk in the opposite direction. It refers to turning away from sin and shallow living and to begin walking through life following God’s direction.

Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday (March 9, 2011), is an opportunity to check our spiritual condition, to repent (if needed) and to walk more faithfully with our Lord. If we take Lent seriously, we can begin to discover a new vision for life – a more joyous way to live. Lent can enable us to discover the immeasurable benefits of living the Christian life passionately.

Stop, look, listen:

Why should we observe Lent?

- We observe Lent because it causes us to STOP. Lent says, “Stop and rest awhile.” Lent says, “Stop doing wrong.”
- We observe Lent because it tells us to LOOK. Look inward for an honest self-examination. Look upward to see the cross of Christ with healing and love. Look forward to the hope of the Resurrection.
- We observe Lent because it tells us to LISTEN. Listen to the words of Christ. Listen to the voice of God. Listen to the winds of the Spirit of God.

Stop, look and listen. These three words are important for our safety in travel, but they may also be helpful for our journey through the days of Lent.

How to pray

- Pray where you are. God is present everywhere and ready to listen.
- Pray, when possible, in a quiet place where you can be alone. It is good to fix your mind deliberately on God, apart from confusing distractions.
- Pray to God simply and naturally, as to a friend. Tell God what is on your mind. Get help from the prayers of others.
- Pray, remembering the good things God has done for you. Give thanks for all your blessings.
- Pray for God’s forgiveness for those things you have regretted doing or things you should have done. God is always near.
- Pray especially for those things that will make your life more Christ-like.
- Pray for others, remembering the help they need for the situations they confront.
- Pray for the world in its need, and for God to guide you toward ways you can help.
- Pray that God will work through you. God’s purposes are deeper and wiser than our own.
- Pray for God’s guidance in your day to day life.
- Pray, and then allow God to answer your prayer.

Missions

“Cans for Communion” March 6th

The Framingham “Hope” Food Pantry has re-opened at their new location at the Framingham Civic League building. For this month’s collection they have especially requested CANNED TUNA and SOUP. Help us re-stock the pantry! Remember, expired or damaged cans cannot be safely donated. We are also seeking a volunteer or two for deliveries on a Wednesday or Saturday morning, 9-noon. Sign up in the fellowship hall or see Mary Memmott for details.

Lenten “Carbon Fast”

If you’d like to participate in a “carbon fast” to lower your environmental impact, with daily email suggestions from the Ecumenical Carbon Fast, please see Rev. Watters or Mary Memmott. Several members of the church will be following this practice this Lent and we would love to have others join us!

Mary Memmott

Christian Education

Thank you!

The whole Grace faith community sincerely thanks Mary Memmott and all those who taught our children this past month. Formal Sunday School lessons focused on the Beatitudes. The children created a terrific bulletin board in the CE classroom to represent and clarify these important Christian beliefs. Please take a moment to take a look for yourself the next time you are in the building.

In March the kids are creating an improvisational skit to be presented the evening of Saturday, March 19 at Comedy Night. More information will be sent via email closer to the event.

Ronda Yeomans

Check out our young blogger

Amelia Burton has a blog: earthcarebyakid.blogspot.com

Amelia’s terrific and informative blog addresses earth issues (including a new addition of photos raising awareness of trash around town!)

Her blog introduction notes: “Hi! This is my first blog. As you already know, I like helping the earth, I hope you do too. By the way, I’m only in fourth grade!”

Well done, Amelia!



Book Club

The Book Club will meet on March 26. We are reading *The Killer Angels* by Michael Saara. It is the book that Framingham is reading for “Framingham Reads”

For details, contact Lynn Burdett. All are welcome to attend book club meetings.

Grace Women United

Grace Women United will meet at church on March 9.

Grace Congregational, UCC

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