

GRACE NOTES

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

Important Meetings in May, June

Sunday, May 2, 11:30 AM (Snacks) R&D Team Part 1
The Research and Discovery Team has been meeting since January in response to a motion* that was voted on at the January Congregational meeting regarding the future of our church. On May 2 the R&D team will present an overview of their findings. Attendees will be given materials that they can take home, review and consider.

Sunday, May 16, 11:30 AM (Lunch) R&D Team Part 2
The Research and Discovery Team will host a second conversation about their findings (presented on May 2). This will be an opportunity for everyone to delve deeper into what they envision as the future of our church.

**Sunday, May 23, 11:30 AM (Lunch) Leadership Team
Congregational Conversation**
This "Big Picture" meeting will be facilitated by the Leadership Team. It will be a discussion about who we are as a congregation and as a religious community. Where is God leading us? What is the Way Forward for Grace Church?

Sunday, June 13, 11:30 AM Congregational meeting
Details to be announced in June Grace Notes

* We move that a team be formed to research and develop scenarios for the future of Grace Church. These scenarios will include:

1. Building additional space
2. Remaining in our current situation
3. Closing Grace Church
4. Other

This team will be charged with preparing reports, on a timely basis, so that the information could be communicated to and discussed in congregational forums this spring. A full report would then be presented at the Congregational Meeting in June, 2010.

Moving Ahead

by Linda Dunbrack

It is time for our faith community to move ahead, together, and make some decisions about our future. They are complicated decisions about which people have many emotions. Whatever we may feel, it is important that we make the right decisions, the ones that God has in mind, and let go of our preconceived ideas. As we look ahead to a congregational meeting on June 13, please invest the time in coming to hear and discuss the paths we might choose on May 2, 16, and 23. But most importantly, take the time to connect with God about this issue, and pray often and deeply. Here is mine:

Loving God,

There is much on the hearts and minds of the people of this congregation as we look to the future. So much is uncertain, and we are feeling lost, as if we are wandering in a wilderness. We have many questions. God, what do you want us

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Dear Ones,

Matthew: *When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted.*

Mark: *But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.*

Luke: *But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.*

John: *...he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'*

On Friday afternoon, we are all on the same page. Jesus has just been killed. Jesus is dead. By Sunday morning, we recognize this as normal. This is the way it happens in the only world we've ever known.

As the days go by, we shrug and sound wise to each other. We note that human brutality in the name of justice, keeping the peace, sustaining traditional power, responding to societal threats, appeasing the crowd, and silencing the voices of dissent has so frequently led to arrest, incarceration, torture, and death.

We return to the former habits of our lives, accepting that dreams and plans, like flowers, die.

On Sunday, some of us see the empty tomb, listen to an angel, and know that Jesus is resurrected from death. Others of us want to reject that thought at first but we find our way to a place of acceptance soon enough. Still others of us need the evidence to mount a little higher. With more witnesses, more encounters

with the risen Christ, and more breakfasts on the beach, we begin to get it, to see it. There are those of us, and maybe some part of each of us, that will only believe when we place our fingers in the wounds of the living hands of Jesus himself.

It takes more than a morning of trumpets for resurrection to sink in.

So, we live our lives between Good Friday and ... when? Easter? Maybe between Good Friday and Pentecost. For on Pentecost, to which we trace the founding of our churches as the Spirit descends on the disciples, we begin to see something concrete again, something we can touch. We begin to see the church.

The church is like Jesus in that it is capable of death, capable of being killed. It is also like Jesus in that it is capable of being reborn. It is also capable of being the place where a soul can find that which will prove to be new life, renewal, and salvation. It is capable of being that kind of

home.

If you have doubts, let them be holy doubts, sacred doubts. If you doubt the risen Christ do not allow that doubt to compromise your hope for the kingdom to be found among us. Do not allow your uncertainty to let you settle for a church that is a building and good friends. Hold to the integrity of the church as the embodiment of Christ still among us. Let no one dissuade you from your struggle to show extravagant kindness, to practice radical welcome, to experience surprising joy in the only life we have, to stand against oppression, and to disrupt any moments when one human being tries to diminish another.

Oh Holy One, we pray for an everyday Pentecost. We pray for the Spirit to inspire our hearts in the divine song. We pray, thy kingdom come. Amen.

Peace and Blessing,
Pastor Brad

Adult Inquiry: Interested in participating?

Editor's Note: Does one or more of these paths of Adult Inquiry interest you? Pastor Brad is eager to lead and accompany us on any and all of these. So make sure he knows your interest. (And if there is another class you would like to see us offer at Grace, let Pastor Brad know that too!)

Kingdom of God

Eclipsing Empire: Paul, Rome, and the Kingdom of God

Join preeminent New Testament scholars Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan on location in Turkey as they trace the Apostle Paul's footsteps throughout the Roman Empire. This 12-session DVD and web-based study explores fresh insights into Paul's message of the Kingdom of God, its challenge to Roman imperial theology, and the apostle's radical relevance for today. We might watch all twelve, one per week, or watch a few and then take a break and

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A Gift for Grace Church

Our church has received a gift of \$1,500.00 from the Colpitts family, given in memory of Lynn Rodriguez, for 2010.

They have requested that this gift be used for Christian Education or Missions. What great ideas do you have for this gift? We're at the brainstorming stage of deciding how to spend this money so all ideas are welcome!

Ideas so far:

- Use some of the money to offset the costs of the Adult Inquiry classes (see page one).
- Use some to sustain the Worcester Fellowship.
- Use some to buy food to augment what we bring for Cans for Communion.
- Use some to offset some of the costs of the End of Life Issues seminar.

Send your ideas to Pastor Brad and we'll stir them into the pot.

Faith in Action

By Jean Burr

"Exploring End of Life Issues"

There is every indication that our seminar, "Exploring End of Life Issues" was a huge success on Saturday, the 17th of April. The day was filled with good advice, good food, friendship, answers to questions, and yes, even some laughs. Comments from those attending included, "useful, informative, positive, outstanding, well done, excellent, helpful" and more of the same. Several topic suggestions were received for a follow-up seminar, which we are considering for the fall.

Styrofoam Collection

Equally successful was the **Styrofoam Collection** on the following Saturday. This was our third such event, and the busiest. As word gets out to the community, more and more Styrofoam is kept out of the landfill, and Grace Church makes more and more friends. The good weather helped to make this a wonderful experience. Thanks, not only to Refoamit, but also to our great kids, especially Cameron, Eleanor, Amelia & Ellen! A great crew!



Special T-shirt Day

When you mark the date of our Congregational Meeting (June 13) on your calendar, make a note, as well, to wear a **Special T-shirt** that day. FIA would like to see as many different tees at the service on that morning, sending messages to one another about whatever is important to you! We expect to see many Grace Church shirts, but this is a chance to make a statement about other organizations or causes which you may be passionate about. Darfur, Red Sox, Hemenway School, etc?

Grace Church calendar - May

May 1	8:00 AM 10:00 AM	Men's Group Church Yard Cleanup		11:30 AM	Research and Discovery Team presentation (lunch)
May 2	8:45 AM 10:00 AM 11:30 AM	Singers Worship Research and Discovery Team presentation (snacks)	May 19	7:30 PM	Stewards
May 8	9:15 AM	Leadership Team meeting (snacks)	MAy 22	Fun at Stearns Farm	
May 9	Mother's Day 8:45 AM 10:00 AM	Singers Worship	May 23	Pentecost - Wear red 8:45 AM 10:00 AM 11:30 AM	Singers Worship Congregational Meeting (lunch)
May 12	11:30 AM	GWU	May 26	10:00 AM 5:30 PM	Book Club Eagles
May 16	8:45 AM 10:00 AM	Singers Worship	May 30	Memorial Day Weekend 8:45 AM 10:00 AM	Singers Worship

Missions

By Mary Memmott

May Cans for Communion – May 2nd

This month the food pantry has especially requested: SPAGHETTI SAUCE and CEREAL. Please 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.

Save the Date – Saturday, May 22 – Fun at Stearns Farm!

The harvest season is coming soon! Grace Church will start its fourth season as a member of

Stearns Farm in Framingham. This year our work



day at the farm will be Saturday, May 22, 9:45 a.m. – 12 p.m., followed by an optional “stone soup” lunch. There is work for all ages and abilities – from sitting at a table planting seedlings to getting down and dirty out in fields. Later in June we will start collecting our share of produce each Friday. At least once a month the produce we collect will be available for members after church; the rest goes to the Framingham “Hope” Food Pantry as a welcome addition to

canned and dry goods on Saturday mornings. This is an important way for Grace to make its presence known in the community – please consider joining in!

Go “Green” On-Line – Check Out the Earth-Care Education Blog

The Earth-Care Education Series with Edwards Church continues – in April we met to share ideas and cook some wonderful, “earth-friendly” meals at the Edwards kitchen. To continue our conversations about local food, earth-friendly cooking, and other topics, we have started an Earthcare Framingham blog. On it you can find pictures from our events, our brief 2009 reading list, recipes, and links to useful resources. Check out the blog and add your comments to the conversation at <http://earth-careframingham.blogspot.com>. Note : there is a link to this blog on our church’s website www.gracechurchucc.org

Stewards

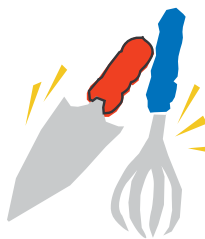
By Jean Burr

A huge thank you to those who helped clean up the yard on April 3 and 10! The men who were here for their group’s meeting stayed and did a mammoth job raking up debris, sweeping the parking lot, sawing & stacking wood. Others weeded, planted, & spruced up inside the building.

The icing on the cake, so to speak, was the installation of our “Grace Congregational Church” sign at the entrance. (This is still a work in progress, so stay tuned for improvements.)

Although much was accomplished already, we are asking for help again on Saturday, May 1, starting at 10:00 a.m. There is much more to be done and many hands are needed. It will soon be time for planting, and

the Grounds team would welcome ideas and assistance from others. Please speak to Brad or any of the Stewards if you would like to help with this, even if you don’t have a green thumb!



A caution to parents: There are a few holes appearing in the grassy areas of our lawns due to last summer’s work and the heavy spring rains. We are in touch with the town about having these repaired, but in the meantime, please caution your children about the danger of these areas.

Grace Women United

Grace Women United will meet on May 12. It will be a regular meeting, possibly working on sorting and alphabetizing the books in the library.

Publicity Point Person

Laura Buck has agreed to be our publicity point person in sending articles to the religion page columnist at the *Metro West Daily News*. If you have a church event or activity that needs to go in the newspaper - please email the copy points to Laura (falbuck@rcn.com). Remember to allow sufficient time for Laura to meet the newspaper’s deadline (usually a week before the publication date).

By Ruth Carney

People of Grace, Easter isn't over. During your preparations for Easter, you may have heard someone say, "All this work and it'll all be over so soon." Sorry, but they're wrong. Easter as a celebration of the return of spring, the Easter of the Easter Bunny and colored eggs and candy, fancy hats and new spring clothes may be over by Easter Monday, not to come around again until next year.

But the true Easter, the celebration of Christ's resurrection, is never over. Easter is the reminder and the celebration of a continuing fact: Christ, who was raised from death, is alive today, tomorrow and forever. Daily he offers us and the whole world power to begin new life now. Easter isn't over ... ever!

A fresh look at Pentecost –

Fifty days after Jesus' resurrection, on a day called Pentecost, the Christian church was born. Because Pentecost was a holiday celebrating the harvest (a bit like our Thanksgiving), the apostles and a large crowd had gathered to celebrate in Jerusalem. Many people had assembled near Peter and the other followers of Christ when "[From heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind ...]" (Acts 2:2 ff, NRSV). Then tongues of fire descended on everyone in the crowd. After the wind and fire descended, all sorts of languages, known and unknown, came out of the crowd. Each person spoke "about God's deeds



of power" (verse 11). No wonder Luke wrote, "All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?'" (verse 12).

The whole affair was mind-boggling and life-changing. The Holy Spirit had come upon many people; they knew God was powerfully at work in their midst. On Pentecost many years ago, some 3,000 people came to believe in Christ. That's why today Christians remember this powerful event as the birthday of the church. Pentecost occurs on May 23 this year. The liturgical color for Pentecost is red. We invite you to wear something red to church on May 23 to celebrate the birthday of the Christian church.



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.

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 selection for May 26 is **THE GURNSEY LITERARY AND POTATO PEEL PIE SOCIETY** by **Mary Ann Schaffer and Annie Barrows.**

By Ronda Yeomans

The Grace Church community extends enthusiastic thanks to all those who taught us important lessons these last few months whether in the Sunday School classroom or in the community itself. Lent and Easter provided us with many opportunities for learning. Now in the 50 days of Eastertide (which is part of Ordinary Time) we continue the Easter Festival celebration of the risen Christ.



We are learning about how even ordinary things or chores can be understood as holy or God's work. We studied the ordinary women who found the empty tomb, the disciples' very human first reactions, and Saul being made blind by the light of Christ. We are learning about how God has chosen ordinary people to do God's work.

This lesson was exemplified in the hours we spent collecting Styrofoam for recycling, to keep it out of landfills and be good stewards of the earth. Thank you to everyone who helped with this important project.

The first Sunday in May, we will help Grace Women United assemble bags of supplies for the needy. This simple chore is another example of doing God's work. Later this spring we will study how the disciples went out to tell the Good News of Jesus Christ to people near and far.

Thanks again to all who have helped to teach us all (old and young) whether through word or deed.

Essays About Grace Church

How do you feel about Grace Church? Why have you committed to Grace through your pledges, your attendance, your attention, your joining to work on worship, a meal, a small group, the yard, and so on?

This is a spiritual exercise for those who choose to participate. Tell us what it is about Grace Church that feeds you, why have you stayed with our church, what makes you proud of Grace Church and its members? When you speak of Grace to others, what do you say? What is it that nourishes your life here? What about Grace feels like the presence of God? Consider Grace now and into the future - not the church of the past.

Send essays to Jean Burr or Linda Hilliard.

Nancy Brown

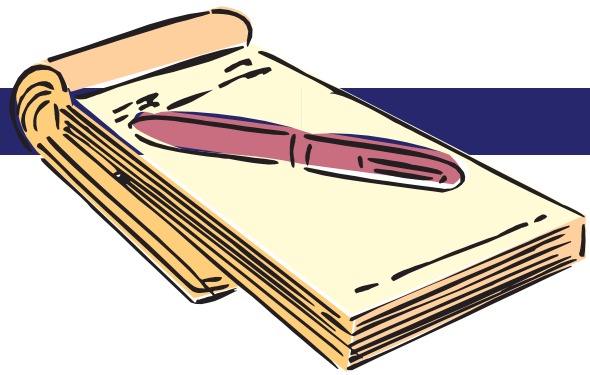
I was born into Grace Church. My younger years, in church school, were very enjoyable. My parents were both involved with the Church. My father sang in the choir and my mother worked with the church school. I mostly remember some of my teachers, not so much what I learned.

When I was in 6th grade, Grace Church showed a film called "King of Kings". That film is what I learned about Jesus. Until 9th grade when Junior High had "Youth Church at 9:30 in the Chapel. We were supposed to go from there to the adult service at 10:30. I didn't want to go in with adults, so I hid out in the Kindergarten department class. I stayed as a helper with the younger children for ten or twelve years and learned most of what I believe to this day.

Grace Church hired a wonderful C.E. director, Mazelle Thomas. I kept teaching Church School and still learning but still not ready to sit in the Adult Service. I married Walter (Brownie) Brown (a Catholic) in my early twenties and we both taught church school until the youngest of our four children were in Junior High.

I was asked to be the Financial Secretary for the Church by our Minister, Wally Short. I began to learn more about the adult life of Grace and became more involved with the administration. I am still the Financial Secretary and have been for about 30 years.

I find that I am a people person and the Church building, although it means a lot to me, the people are a big reason for me to go to Church every Sunday.



Jean Burr

It took me several weeks of thinking about this before I was ready to put my feelings on paper. Most of what I feel about Grace Church has to do with my personal memories, starting as a small girl, about 75 years ago. (Gee whiz!) At that time, I really didn't like Sunday school and hated sitting still in church, where I was supposed to be interested in what "those people" were saying. However, even then, I was aware of how important all of this was to my parents who, incidentally, were two of the courageous parishioners who helped to rebuild Grace Church after the devastating fire!

As I look back now, so much of my life revolved around activities at Grace. I remember getting dressed up for the Mother & Daughter Banquets, the wonderful street fairs which were held annually, teas, fashion shows, plays and other wonderful fun things. I remember my wedding day and that of my daughter, Barbara's wedding. I remember the day that she, at three years old, came into the front of the church before the communion service was over, stopped, and with hands on hips, said "What are you drinking anyway?" I remember baptisms and I remember memorial services for good friends and family members.

Amid the laughter and tears associated with these memories, I remember people—ministers, pillars of the church, some who really intimidated me, but most of whom, I loved. I remember learning and re-learning about God and knowing that I was free to ask questions and make statements about my beliefs and doubts. I haven't stopped doing this!

Grace Church has now reached a point at which we must make decisions about our future. Gracie Allen once said, "Don't put a period where God has put a comma", so Brad recently gave us all small, red pins in the shape of a comma. I wear mine knowing full well that there is no period looming ahead for Grace Church—just a comma.

Essays About Grace Church

Walter Brown

I was a child born in the early years of the “Great Depression” and raised in the Roman Catholic church. Sunday school, first communion, confirmation, Altar Boy Attendant were all a big honor for me. I worked hard to learn the Latin words and what to do at the right time in the service to assist the priest.

My mother and father did not go to church, so I was told by the priest in charge “Sorry, we can’t use you.” I was 12 years old.

I would go to church every Sunday because my mother said I had to or “God would get me.” Instead, I would take my envelope with its shiny nickel and go to a variety store nearby and buy a nickels worth of chocolate malt balls, then head to my safe place where “God could not see me.” That place was a drain pipe big enough to crawl into beside the Railroad tracks. When the church bell rang and it was time to go home, my mother would ask what did you learn today, and I would say “I learned about God today.” I did not tell the truth but thought, “God can you see me”? (The pipe is still there, I check on it sometimes)

I came home on an emergency furlough from my military station in Alabama when my grandfather died. I did not make the burial in time and they did not wait for me. It was many years before I could go to my grandfather’s grave. My friend said I had to have some fun; he knew these girls who lived in the next town. I said sure let’s go. I had never dated before. We (Nancy and I) met a couple of times, had fun together, but my furlough was up and I had to return to my base. We agreed to write.

What is it about Grace that feeds you?

After I came home, we met again. We joined a youth hay ride and I was introduced to a youth teacher from Grace Church, (Auntie Mazelle Thomas). We ended up at her home for hot chocolate with a fire in the fire place. This was the first time I felt welcomed by anyone in a very long time. In 1950, Nancy and I were married in Grace Church and in 1953, I joined the church and was given my very own Bible from Nancy’s mother

and father: a book that I hold dear to my heart. My Bible is a book full of our history in the life of Grace Church. To be taken in as a nobody and to be allowed to become somebody is the greatest food that feeds me as a member of Grace Church.

Why have I stayed?

Being accepted as member of the choir early on and singing with some great voices in our congregation was a thrill for me. I must add that when Auntie Mazelle called for help, I could never say no.

So my life in the church began. I was on many committees and groups over the years and have been involved in many programs/projects (some failures and some accomplishments). There was never room to consider leaving. I am always energized by a need to give a helping hand; to get something done.

Am I a proud member of Grace Church?

Sure, is the easy answer. To back it up and tell someone how proud I am will bring on a host of memory stories of my life in Grace Church, the ups and the downs of the fun times and sad times. I am not sure I ever considered being in a religious place, but rather a gathering of very good people in community to help others less fortunate. It is hard for me to talk about the church unless asked, but then a flood of information will come forth. The statement in Grace Notes “we can look in any mirror at ourselves and say “well done!” sums up all that we are.

What about Grace and the presence God?

This is a tough one. In the back of my mind, deep in my soul, is the question stated earlier: “God can you see me?” There are great moments during worship/gatherings with my friends around, that I sense a presence, a feeling.

I am not sure how to close all of this other than to say “Thank you people of Grace for being there, my place of peace.”

Moving Ahead

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*to do? What do you want us to be?
How is it that we are to be Christ's
ambassadors to the world? How can
we best serve your wider purpose?*

God of Hope,

*· Clear our minds so that there is
room for your ideas and wisdom*

*· Open our eyes so that we might
perceive the clues you place before
us*

*· Sharpen our ears so that we might
hear your wisdom in one another's
words*

God of Wisdom and Strength,

*Our path is yet to be determined.
Please help us choose.*

*· Direct our feet to the path you
intend, rather than a side trail set
by others.*

*· Guide our mouth so that, we talk
the talk, and*

*· Strengthen our bodies and our
resolve so that we walk the walk*

*As we journey together on this path
of uncertainty.*

Amen

Adult Inquiry

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have subsequent sessions.

Theology

The Heart of Christianity, By Marcus Borg

Find a theology that sustains and enlightens you and is untangled from the Christianity of your childhood, of the loud fundamentalists, of the over-organized church, and popular misconception. Here will be a place to say the things you are afraid to say lest someone drum you out of the church! This book will be read in chapters over many weeks with outlines and summaries available to help comprehension. A readable book on theology!

Anti-Racism

This course weaves personal experience, information, videos, books, and conversation to deepen our understanding of racism and anti-racism in the USA. Without blaming or shaming anyone, we will do the deep work that transforms us into people equipped to do the work of dismantling racism and unearned privilege in our community, in our church, and in our own lives. Come laugh and cry and learn about this

sensitive topic. Let's enter the Sacred Conversation on Race in America.

Our Whole Lives: Sexuality and Faith

Talk about laughter? Come engage as adults in an up-to-date study of our fascinating sexual natures. The course involves exercises, discussion, sharing, and truth-telling. We reconsider how our faith and our sexuality are not opposed, how sex isn't the taboo topic, and how relieved and released we can all be by sharing this journey.

Grace Congregational, UCC

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They're Back!

The Not Ready for Anytime Players are Reassembling

Director Daleen Perkins is back on her feet and ready to put forth a production this fall. If you are interested in putting on the grease paint and presenting a dinner mystery theater show, call Daleen or Jean Burr.