

GRACE NOTES

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

Coming Up at Grace

Styrofoam Collection - April 30

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



Plus: Sale of May Baskets*

10:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Volunteers are needed throughout the day. Speak to Jean Burr.
Note: May Baskets will be sold both at the church - and at Framingham Common.

Yard Cleanup Day - May 7

See Page Four



Yard Sale - May 14

See Page Three

Sunday Brunch - May 22

See Page Four



Larger Space Team Holds Kick-off Meeting with Architect

by Linda Dunbrack

On Tuesday, April 26, the Larger Space Team had the pleasure of meeting with Architect Graham Ruggie from Janez Design and other members of the Design and Construction Team. We discussed both process and projected schedule for developing a plan for a larger worship space. It was a relief to finally pull the Team together to discuss a plan of action after having spent a month swapping contracts and coordination e-mails.

Over the next 4 months, the congregation and the Design and Construction team will be involved in a process that will culminate in a final design concept that includes not just a new larger space but a long-term plan for the site. The process has two major phases, which are described in more detail below.

Phase 1 is the Feasibility

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Shape of Ministry Team Awaits Feedback
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From the Pastor

Dear Ones,

This is a good time of year to consider the teaching of Jesus we call "The Parable of the Sower." You can find it in all three of the synoptic gospels, which is to say, in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It is familiar to you, is it not? The sower casts seed at planting time. The seed falls on different kinds of ground and is differently fruitful. In Matthew 13, Jesus provides an explanation of the metaphor, describing how the seed is people, all hearing about the kingdom of God. The seeds flourish or fail in different ways: the people understanding the kingdom flourish in that awareness while others don't get it and so fail to flourish.

A few weeks ago, our worship service was dominated by a large table right in the middle of the room. It wasn't an altar or a table for sharing communion. It wasn't set up for coffee hour or potluck. Instead, it held plastic trays, potting soil, and some packets of seeds. During the service, we put the potting soil into the little sections of the trays. We put seeds in the soil. We added water. Weeks later, the seeds have sprouted, "started," and we've got three trays of seedlings. All these seeds found fertile ground.

Now what?

Now the seeds are started and we live in New England where the first of May is too early to plant most things. The weather swings from bone-chilling, to damp, to fiercely windy, to the surprisingly harsh sunlight of mid-spring. These seedlings are ready to "harden," to be thinned, and to move to more solid soil. We'll have to be attentive and work conscientiously. Even after a good start, some won't make it.

The metaphor continues, doesn't it? Our spiritual journeys continue after the first planting. We know better than to think that the seed, once planted, is all set for the rest of its life, ready to be fruitful when its time is fulfilled. We know that plants need to be "hardened," which is to say, brought gradually to more challenging conditions so that they strengthen and deepen before they get to bearing flowers or fruit. We know this is true for our growth in the kingdom of God and in our spiritual lives. We continue learning: we practice. We can do some of this alone: we get to do some of this together.

What challenge are you seeking now? What challenge presents itself to you? Where do you fear? Where are you curious? For what are you longing? These questions, again, are powerful when you ask

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Calendar - May

April 30 **STYROFOAM COLLECTION (10:00AM)**

May 1 **CANS FOR COMMUNION**
 9:00 AM Singers
 10:00 AM Intergenerational Worship
Reverend Gretchen Switzer, guest preacher

May 7 **YARD CLEAN UP (9:00 AM)**
 8:00 AM Men's Group

May 8 9:00 AM Singers
 10:00 AM Intergenerational Worship

May 11 11:30 PM Grace Women United

MAY 13 **YARD SALE SORTING/PRICING**
 All day Friday

May 14 8:00 AM Yard Sale set up
YARD SALE (9:00 AM)

May 15 9:00 AM Singers
 10:00 AM Worship
 10:00 AM Sunday School

May 17 7:30PM Stewards meet

May 21 9:00 AM **Yard Sale Rain Date**

May 22 9:00 AM Singers
 10:00 AM Worship
 10:00 AM Sunday School
 Noon Sunday Brunch

May 25 10:00 AM Book Club
 May 29 9:00 AM Singers
 10:00 AM Intergenerational Worship

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

YARD SALE!

All Church (and Guests) Yard Sale

Saturday, May 14 (rain date May 21)
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 Walk to Prevent Homelessness).

**Church members are encouraged to donate items to the sale.
We are also going to rent tables (\$25 each) to those
who would like to set up in our yard.**

Please spread the word.

**Outside sellers will 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.

Morning coffee and Lunch (chili) will be available.
Donations of breakfast snacks and desserts would be welcomed.

**Volunteers are needed to price merchandise (on Thursday and Friday, May 12 and 13),
help with set up (and break down),
staff the tables and the lunch**

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.

Speak to Jean Burr or Linda Hilliard.



Deacons

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!

As we enter into the Sundays

of Easter (the six Sundays that follow Easter), we will welcome back to our church Reverend Gretchen Switzer on May 1.

The saying goes: "April showers bring May flowers" – with all the rain we have been having, May should be bursting out all over. Whatever the weather brings us, please stay safe. You are an important piece of the fabric that is Grace.

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*

Stewards

It's that time of the year again! Most of us are beginning the **Spring Chore** of cleaning up the winter debris from our yards and our church home is no different. We urge all to join the Stewards on May 7, following the men's group meeting, to rake, plant, sweep, weed (or whatever) in order to make our grounds inviting to our neighbors and those passing by. We will begin to gather between 9 and 10 in the morning. When we finish depends on how many come to help. There will be tasks available for one and all!



Now that the weather is such that our children will be playing outside, please be sure that they remain on our grassed in areas. The brook bordering our property can be inviting to youngsters but could also be a danger to them. Stewards will be conversing with the Conservation Commission to see what, if anything, either they (or we) could do to make this a safer area.

Faith in Action

Thank you to Grace Women United for the luncheon and kitchen shower which they hosted last month. Several items have been added to the kitchen equipment and supplies, which were much needed.



Faith in Action's plan to have a **Monthly Lunch/Brunch** date was put on hold for April because of the shower, but on May 22, we will be going to the Trackside Grille in Ashland, meeting there after worship, probably about noon. Prices are very reasonable and there is lots of room there. There will be a menu posted on the bulletin board.

Be sure to turn it over to see both sides. In order to have an idea of how many are interested, please sign up on the sheet provided or call Jean Burr.

Grace Women United

Grace Women United says THANKS! to all those who donated items and money to the recent Kitchen Shower. Our kitchens are well stocked thanks to everyone's generosity.

GWU will meet on Wed, May 11 at 11:30.

Christian Education

The current Sunday school teachers met with Pastor Brad on Sat. April 2 to discuss the current situation and future implementation of the program. Since the children are older now and better able to appreciate service, the children will start out in service every week. On Sunday school days, they will participate in the "sit and consult with one another" time which often begins the service. They will also be able to offer up their own prayers at the same time the adults express their concerns and celebrations. The students will transition up to Sunday school after we exchange the sign of peace. This will help everyone (children, teachers and other adults) feel more connected to the church community.

Also, we are adopting a Sunday School schedule of Daleen Perkins consistently teaching

the second Sunday of the month with Mary Memmott teaching on the third Sunday and Ronda Yeomans teaching the fourth Sunday. The first Sunday of the month and certain holidays will remain intentionally intergenerational services. The first Sunday of the month and certain holidays will remain intergenerational services.

Ronda Yeomans has stepped down as administrator for the Sunday School program, but will continue to teach and write the *Grace Notes* copy. Daleen Perkins will continue to order curriculum from the UCC "Come Join the Circle" program.

Pastor Brad and Daleen met with the children for a pizza dinner on Friday April 10 to hear the children's view points on how they would like Sunday School lessons to proceed in future, which events they prefer and any future activities they

would enjoy. Sincere thanks to Brad and Daleen for reaching out to our children in this way.

Brad and the Sunday School teachers would like to have a meeting with parents and teachers both in May. Since scheduling is problematic, please send possible times you are available to Brad so that we may set up a time.

Heartfelt thanks also to Mary Memmott for stepping up and teaching April 10. The children were in service with the Adults on April 2, Palm Sunday and Easter. A sincere thank you to Pastor Brad for planning child friendly services which allow movement, hands-on work and verbal interaction. Coming up this month, May 1st, 8th, and 29th will be intentionally intergenerational services. Sunday School lessons will be offered on May 15 and 22.

Missions

Cans for Communion is May 1st at Grace

The Framingham "Hope" Food Pantry is still settling in to their new location at the Framingham Civic League building. For this month's collection we will especially be collecting PASTA and PEANUT BUTTER, but all non-perishable food donations are welcome. Remember, expired or damaged cans cannot be safely donated. If you would like to help deliver the cans, please sign up in the fellowship hall or see Mary Memmott for details.

From the Pastor *Continued from page one*

them of yourself. You construct your own path of growth. However, it is wise to consider these questions with one or more other people. For though some wisdom comes from solitary truth-telling, our inner-directed path is far deeper and more "kingdom-like" when considered in conversations with those who we trust or may come to trust. It's always good to invite another pair of eyes and ears, another heart and mind, to consider your spiritual

journey, no matter who you are or where you are.

It is also good to consult those who have tilled the soil in the past when you are trying to move seedlings from the shelter of indoor trays into their outdoor beds. They can help you figure out the next challenge for those seedlings.

Peace and Blessing,
Brad

Shape of Ministry Team Awaits Feedback

A few weeks ago, the Shape of Ministry at Grace Team mailed job evaluations for Pastor Brad to all active church members. The deadline for returning these surveys is this Sunday, May 1.

This Shape team was charged with the task of evaluating the church staff and reviewing Pastor Brad's contract (which is up in June 2011). The evaluation surveys* are an integral part of this task. (* *The surveys for Kab are only being given to those who work with her directly*).

It is critical to the team to have all members take the time to respond to the survey regarding Pastor Brad. If we don't hear from you, we will call.

Note: All feedback will be kept confidential. The team members are: Linda Hilliard (convener) and Laura Buck, Ruth Carney, Judy Sebastian and Daleen Perkins. Feel free to confidentially share thoughts and ideas with team members.



Book Club

The Book Club will meet on April 27 at 10:00 AM in the church library. We are reading *The Psysick Book* of Deliverance Dane* by Katherine Howe. The next meeting is May 25 - book to be determined. For details, contact Lynn Burdett. All are welcome to attend book club meetings.

Space Team Kick-off Meeting

Continued from page one

Study, which is currently scheduled to be completed in June. The schedule will be adapted as events evolve. The Feasibility Study has two major components: the "Build-Out Analysis" and the "Existing Building Assessment."

The "Build-Out Analysis" is an evaluation of the site and the constraints on building due to wetlands, the flood plain, sewer easement, zoning, etc. Some of the work already done to get an occupancy permit will provide a head start. Even as Grace Notes goes to print, Mark Beaudry, a civil engineer on the Janez Design and Construction team, will be at the church looking at the conservation issues.

The "Existing Building Assessment" will include a history of the building and what has already been done to maintain and improve the building, and a look at building components and materials.

Phase 2 is Master Planning which also has two components: Programming and Conceptual Design. "Programming" is essentially a needs assessment. Conceptual Design is the time when ideas start to get translated into pictures and dollars. Under the current schedule,

Phase 2 would be complete at the end of August.

Want to get involved? The Larger Space Team would welcome new participants interested in planning and facilitating congregational involvement. Contact Brad or Linda Dunbrack if you are interested.

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