



Herald of Good TIDINGS

“Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, ‘Behold your God!’”
Isaiah 40:9

FROM THE PASTOR

As we enter into February, I think about leap year. Is 2020 a leap year? (I look at my New England Patriots calendar.) Yes, yes, it is.

Do you think our concept of time is weird? 60 seconds in a minute. 60 minutes in an hour. 24 hours in a day. 7 days in a week. A month is 28, 29, 30 or 31 days. A year isn't even a full pass around the sun, as a year is 365.25 days, but not really. The pass around the sun is a little short of 365.25 days. Priests in Europe made the Gregorian Calendar in 1582. With the rule: “Every year that is exactly divisible by four is a leap year, except for years that are exactly divisible by 100, but these centurial years are leap years if they are exactly divisible by 400. For example, the years 1700, 1800, and 1900 are not leap years, but the years 1600 and 2000 are.”

Easy, right? Why 60 seconds and minutes instead of 100? Why don't 4 weeks equal a month? Time is just weird, which is why the shortest month, February, often seems the longest.

When I think of February, I think of being tired of cold and darkness. With the weather, all I can think is to persevere. Per severe; we make it through something severe. Persevere goes with the serenity prayer.

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference. - Reinhold Niebuhr
Those three things: to accept and persevere through things we cannot change; courage to change what should be changed, and wisdom to know what we can change and what we can't.

If we think we are too strong, we will try to change things we can't change and waste our strength futilely. If we underestimate our strength, we will not change a bad thing it is in our power to change, leaving the world worse than it needs to be.

As we go through February, we will persevere. The days will get longer and eventually warmer. The nights will get shorter. Soon we will be complaining that it is too hot.

And in the heat or the cold: God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference. Amen.

God Bless,

Pastor Brian

SERMON TITLES

2/2 “Do Justice, Love Kindness, and Walk Humbly with Your God”
2/9 “You Are the Salt of the Earth”

2/16 “You Have Heard”
2/23 Children's: “Kum Ba Yah”
“How Do We Get Prophetic Messages?”

There will be a **Worship Planning Meeting on Sunday, February 9**. At this meeting we will go over the details for our special services in the spring. All members are welcome at the meeting if they have input on our Easter, Holy Week, or Lenten services. In addition to Pastor Brian, Paulette, and Jean, **representatives from the BOCE, Deacons, and Music Committee are expected to attend.**

Bell choir rehearsals will be held at 2:30 PM Sunday afternoons February 2, 9, and 16. Rehearsal will be at 9:00 AM on Sunday the 23rd in preparation for participation in the service that day.

UPCOMING COFFEE HOUR HOSTS

2/2 Stewardship Committee 2/9, 16 Outreach Committee
2/23 & 3/1 Personnel Committee



Here We Grow Preschool

Here We Grow will once again be conducting a "Calendar Giveaway" this year. The sale part of this fundraiser will run the month of February. The give-away part will be done each day in March. If you would like to purchase a calendar, they are \$10.00 each and have some wonderful prizes; each with at least a \$20.00 or more value. Stop into the **Here We Grow** office or see Denise to purchase a calendar; thank you in advance for your support. All monies earned go toward field trips, special programs, equipment for the classrooms, and enrichment classes offered to the children (move & groove, yoga, etc).

We have started enrollment for next year, and our four-year-old classes are filling up. Our Open House will be on March 3rd, from 9:00-11:00. We still have openings in most sessions. If you know of a friend, neighbor, or relative who is looking for a preschool, please send them our way.

When thinking about whether to send your child to preschool for the first time, keep in mind what you are hoping to get out of the experience. We start accepting children when they are 2 years, nine months and for them, our focus is all about social/emotional growth, which means getting along in a group, taking directions from adults other than Mom and Dad, learning to share.

For children getting ready for kindergarten we are focusing more on academic skills, learning about letters and numbers, printing their names while still providing social skills.

We are also fortunate to be able to offer a class for young 4-year-olds. This class is designed for those children who may have already done a year of preschool and need an extra year because they do not make the kindergarten cutoff in their town.

For more information about any of our classes, please feel free to stop in the office or call 508-832-8184.

The school will be closed for winter break from February 17-21. We hope you all have a warm and healthy month.

Cristi Corey, Director, **Here We Grow** Preschool

Message from the Treasurer

Greetings, as we enter into the new year, I would like to remind everyone that any requests for reimbursements need to have receipts submitted whenever available. Also, I would like to remind everyone to make use of the Payment Authorization Forms that are in the conference room for all expenses that require reimbursement. Please have the appropriate person on the committee authorize any expenditures that are made. If the requestor (seeking reimbursement) is on that committee already, please have a different member of that committee approve the reimbursement. This also goes for any purchases made on the Church's credit card.

Thank you for your understanding.

Nick Stockhaus, Treasurer



Happy 97th Birthday to Maybelle Stone who will celebrate her special day on February 14th! If you would like to send May a birthday card, her new address is:
Linda Manor, 345 Hadenville Road,
Room 203, Leeds, MA 01053.

Also, as May's birthday approaches, Debbie Pranaitis will have cards in fellowship hall for church members to sign.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH'S SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS

Scholarship applications will soon be available on the table in Fellowship Hall. We have several scholarships we would like to award to church members seeking to continue their education. Specifically, there are two scholarships dedicated to those studying within the medical field, and one scholarship gives preference to those who are musically inclined and, of course, we have several unrestricted scholarships as well. Please complete the application form and return it to the Memorial/Scholarship Committee's mailbox by April 15th.

ANNUAL COMMUNITY YARD and PLANT SALE

SAVE THE DATE ~ SATURDAY JUNE 20TH ~ 8am-1pm

Once again we will be holding our Community Yard and Plant Sale. It has been 25 years since holding our first yard sale in 1995! Although I don't know exactly, I think there were only 3 years that it was not held during that time.

As in the past, we will have a "church table" with items for sale donated by church members and friends of the church. The remainder of the participants are members of the church and the community who rent spaces for the day to sell their items.

Our Plant Table Team, organized this year by Connie Hanks and staffed by a committee of gardeners, is already beginning to make plans. If you are interested in becoming a part of this group, contact Connie Hanks at clwhanks@gmail.com or call her at 508-832-4227. Last year the plants alone raised \$975.00 for the church's general fund.



Although refreshments will be somewhat scaled back this year, we will have coffee and baked goods available in the morning and something for lunch, TBD, as well.

As the date draws closer, we will be asking for a minimal amount of your time to help with this FUNdraiser. Please mark your calendars to lend a hand. If you don't plan on renting your own space, please start setting aside things you no longer want and donate them to the church's table. PLEASE NO VCR TAPES, CLOTHING, TVs, OR COMPUTER EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING MONITORS.

If you have any questions about this event, please contact me, Cindy Dube, at home, 508-832-6646 or call or text my cell, 774-238-0260. I am looking forward to another year working together and having fun while doing it!

Until Spring, God Bless — Cindy



Clifford Leonard "Cliff" Peterson, age 93, died peacefully on Sunday December 29, 2019. He is survived by his daughter, Melinda M. Gauthier and her husband Mark; his son, Leonard S. "Lennie" Peterson and his fiancée Samantha Larocque; and his 3 loving grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren; a son-in-law, Bruce T. Rawley; as well as his loving partner and companion of 14 years, Judith Taft.

Cliff is predeceased by his wife, Shirley (Coleman) Peterson, and his second wife, Mildred (Allen) Peterson; his daughter, Christine Rawley, and his brother, Stanley Peterson.

Cliff was born September 8, 1926 in Worcester and grew up in West Boylston, MA. He enlisted in the Navy directly out of high school in 1944 and became a Seabee. As a result of a submarine attack in the South Pacific, he was hospitalized and given an honorable discharge with disability status after four years of service.

In 1950, Cliff married Shirley Coleman. The couple had 3 children and he continued his career as a machinist and die sinker at Wyman Gordon Company in Grafton, MA where the family made their home. A highlight of his life, Cliff eventually had the opportunity to go to Bombay, India for 6 months for the company where he trained workers there in his specialized trade. Cliff retired after 39 years at Wyman Gordon.

Sadly, after many years of being happily married, Shirley died in 1985 from leukemia. Cliff then married Mildred Allen and became residents of Leicester, MA and then Auburn, MA. They enjoyed life together with many travels and an active social life for 19 years. In 2006, Millie was diagnosed with a brain tumor and passed shortly after. In the following years, Cliff was appreciative of the support from his family as well as his devoted longtime girlfriend, Judi Taft, and her family, and his countless friends. He considered his family and friends a "godsend."

Cliff enjoyed several hobbies, good food, camping, travel, fun, and a special love of music. As a life-long trumpet player, he performed with many Central Massachusetts community and marching bands. Later in life, he was the conductor of the Aletheia Grotto Band, leading the band in countless public performances and charity concerts throughout many years. He was a Master Mason (Franklin Lodge A.F. & A.M. Shrewsbury) and a member of the Aleppo Shriners, as well as a longtime active member, secretary, and president of the Greendale Men's Club. He was also a member and guest preacher here at First Congregational Church.

A funeral service was held here on Tues., Jan. 7 followed by burial in Riverside-Fairview Cemetery in Grafton.

Please keep Cliff's loved ones in your prayers during this time of loss.

We are pleased to announce:

Katherine Virginia Shapter & Ronald Moore Klauke

were joined in marriage on Saturday, January 11th, 2020.

Congratulations, Kay and Ron, from your church family!

Just Married!

THE FOLLOWING RESULTS ARE FROM THE OCTOBER AUBURN WALK FOR HUNGER
TO SUPPORT AYFS FOOD PANTRY & KATERI'S KITCHEN

Association	Number of Walkers	Total
North American Martyrs	11	1267.00
AYFS (Auburn Youth & Family Services)	1	80.00
Bethel Lutheran Church	4	505.00
St. Thomas	1	50.00
First Congregational Church	2	600.00
St. Joseph's Church	6	1153.21
	25	\$ 3,655.21

Thank you to all who walked and to all who gave.

2020 Walk is scheduled for October 25, 2020



February is American Heart Month, International Prenatal Infection Prevention Plan Month, Low Vision Awareness Month, National Children's Dental Health Month, and Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month.

February 2-8 is Burn Awareness Week

February 4 is World Cancer Day

February 7-11 is Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Week

February 7 National Wear Red Day

February 14 is National Donor Day

February 17-21 Random Acts of Kindness Week

Congratulations to all the cancer survivors. This is due to early detection and treatment.

The flu is here; prevent illness by washing your hands. Cover your mouth and nose when you cough and sneeze. It's not too late to get a flu shot.

The closet has been used quite a bit lately. Items are coming and going. I'm happy to know we are sharing with parishioners and their friends and neighbors.

Stay warm and healthy during these cold months. God Bless!

Debbie Pranaitis, Parish Nurse, 508-612-4521

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



"God is love" (1 John 4:8). The apostle Paul wrote words of encouragement to believers saying, "The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (Romans 5:5) The Holy Spirit makes the love of God so abundant in the believer's heart that it overflows. (1 John 4:8, 16).

During this month, let us enjoy the outpouring of love through cards and gifts, but let us not forget the true meaning of the word.

Sunday school is going well; we have had a tough time with attendance recently, but the teachers are very flexible and, if need be, we combine classes and persevere. Gone are the days when Sunday morning was church first and sports/parties later; so we teach those who are here when they are here. As always, we invite ANYONE to come down to volunteer or just check out a class to see what the kids are learning. I believe many of you would be surprised at how knowledgeable the kids are becoming about the Bible and history of Jesus.

Youth On a Mission

We are sorry to say that the fundraiser had to be cancelled last month. Our plans are to re-schedule later this spring. We are currently in a leadership change and, as we all know, change is hard for some.

I do want to commend both Lillian and Shannon for all that they do for the teens. It is important for all to know that our leaders always do the best they can. A lot of time, "blood, sweat, and tears," go into trying to make this group a success. One leader is a young woman who has recently graduated from college and is trying her best to run her FIRST fun and productive group, while trying to secure a full time job and working. The other is a mother of 2 elementary aged children and lives two towns away from everyone else; working hard in her FIRST endeavor leading a group such as this. Fred Comeau has agreed to join Lillian for the remainder of this year. So we hope ALL will be supportive of the transition, and if anyone would like to help with planning teen events, please speak to me or Lillian.

March 6-8 is our weekend at Monadnock Bible Ministries where we hope this group will take the time to delve into God's word and come together as a supportive group. Please pray for all in attendance. I want to thank George Scobie and Fred Comeau for agreeing to chaperone along with Lillian.

Love, serve one another. (Galatians 5:13)

Jean McPherson

Director of Religious Education

There will be a mandatory Monadnock meeting (with parents) after the service on Feb. 2nd.

NOTE: The youth will be taking a monetary collection on Feb. 2nd, SOUPer Bowl Sunday, to benefit soup kitchens/food banks. Thank you.

*To My Church Family,
Thank you for the basket at
Christmas. It was greatly
appreciated.*

Happy New Year.

Charlotte (Steffen)

*I got a wonderful basket and
want to say a big thank you.
I was so surprised that you
still thought of me. I appre-
ciated the basket so much!*

— Marjorie Zimmerman



At this time, we are only looking to cover just 3 suppers (April, September, and October). Our Boy Scout Troop 101 has graciously agreed to host our March community supper! Thank you, scouts!

We do have one church member who is willing to head up a supper or two (thank you!).

If several individuals and/or groups get together, we're confident we can continue to run successful church supper **fundraisers**. All supper expenses are covered by the church. We are strictly looking for volunteer chefs to cook the suppers.

Please contact the church office, 508-832-2845, if you would like to be added to the list of chefs. **Thank you!**

TIDINGS is a monthly publication of

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OR CURRENT RESIDENT