



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

Cabbage (my long haired dachshund dog) does not like the rain, but loves the snow. Only on a rainy day is Cabbage quick to do his business and pulling hard to go back inside. On snowy days Cabbage sniffs the snow obsessively. He will flip onto his back and wiggle around in the snow. Then he will play snow plow, something easy for him to do because his chest is only an inch off the ground when he is standing tall. All this is assuming the snow is not over his head, that is less than a foot. Over a foot of snow is too hard for him to plow through and too high for him to jump through for long. Within 5 feet of walking in deep snow Cabbage is done; exhausted, ready to go home, chew the clumps of snow out of his fur, and take a nap. Cabbage only wants so much snow and too much is overwhelming.

I think we are all like that. We wait for the warm weather, then complain about the August heat wave. We want the heat, but too much is overwhelming. We want a white Christmas, but snow soon wears out its welcome. For some, snow and cold is a burden right after Christmas. Some can love snow through January, but I think most people are done loving winter a month before it finally departs.

How do we handle too much of a good thing? That seems to be a problem of our age. There are so many things to do that we get overwhelmed. The good thing like snow becomes a chore instead of a joy.

The call of God to a Sabbath is important. A day to not shovel snow. A day to not be busy. A day to just be, to veg out. We might not be able to Sabbath every week, but I would encourage you to take time to not do, rather just be. That is why snow days are so special. They can be a Sabbath day, a day free from things to do, a day to recreate ourselves through rest and play. Even if play is walking a dog that insists on dropping his front end down on the snow and plowing through being pushed by his back legs.



God bless you and grant you a blessed New Year,

Pastor Brian



SERMON TITLES

1/5 “The Wise Men”

1/12 “Who Saw This Wonderful Thing?”

1/19 “John Sees Things Differently”

1/26 Cliff Peterson Preaches

Children’s Sermon:

“The Wise Men”

“A Bruised Reed He Will Not Break”

“Can You Change?”



Important Notice for all Officers & Committee Members:

The Annual Meeting will be held here on **Saturday, January 18th at 3 p.m.** (All committee/board end of year reports are NOW due.) The **Installation of Officers and Committees** will be during worship on **January 19th.** The **All Committee Meeting** will be on **Tuesday, January 21st at 7 p.m.**

2014 Offering Envelopes

Please pick up your 2014 offering envelopes located at the church in the back of the Sanctuary. If you can't find your envelopes, it means you did not make a pledge or didn't indicate that you wanted envelopes. Please see Lori or Nick Stockhaus with any questions.

Coffee Hour Hosts

1/5, 1/12 ~ Trustees

1/19 ~ Music Committee

Please note: a new coffee hour schedule will be distributed at the All Committee Meeting on Tuesday, January 21st at 7 p.m.

Happy Birthday to:

Lillian McPherson ~ 1/19/96
Cassandra Stockhaus ~ 1/23/99



Please notify the church office if you would like to have your special occasion noted in the *Tidings* – just email secretary@auburnfirstucc.org or call 508-832-2845 with your event info.

Lenten Soup and Sandwich Night (A Look Ahead)

We will again be having a Lenten soup and sandwich night followed by a discussion on Wednesday nights during Lent. We'll start at 6 p.m. and end around 7. So far VeggieTales videos have been suggested. If you have any suggestions for topics, please talk to Pastor Brian. For suggestions on menu items, talk to the church boards/committees as they will be signing up at "All Committee Night" (in January) to provide the meal.

FROM THE CHURCH SECRETARY

Mere words cannot express the gratitude I feel in my heart. Once again you remembered me at Christmas, and once again, I'm humbled by your generosity.

Thank you so much for your thoughtfulness, not only during the Christmas season, but throughout the year. The First Congregational Church family continues to be a huge blessing in my life, and I am most grateful.

God bless you all,

Denise



Congratulations to the Pickard Family on the birth of **Tori-Reigh Lynn Pickard** born November 28th at 4:39 a.m. and weighing 5lbs., 11oz. and 17inches long.

Proud family members include:
parents - Lorin and Jason Pickard, grand-
parents - Linda and Tom Pickard, great-
grandparents - Bob Burns and the late Don
and Flo Aker, and Aunt and Uncle - Lori
and Nick Stockhaus.



Happy New Year!

January is Cervical Health Awareness Month, National Birth Defects Month, National Blood Donor Month, and National Glaucoma Awareness Month. There is information on the health table in Fellowship Hall.

The health closet at the end of the educational wing has medical supplies that can be taken at any time. Someone has a used scooter that won't fit in the closet, so if someone needs one, please contact me or the church office.

This is cold and flu season. Hand washing is the BEST way to prevent the spread of germs. Take time to wash thoroughly and sing "ABC's," "Twinkle, Twinkle," or just count the seconds. It's worth it!

If you or a loved one is hospitalized and you want a visit, please call the church office. Also check to see if the person is registered as admitted or on observation. It can make a difference in what your insurance covers!

Have a Happy, Healthy New Year!

Debbie Pranaitis
Parish Nurse
cell: 508-612-4521

January 2014

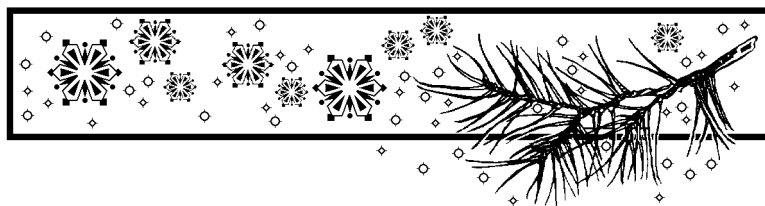
Happy New Year! I pray you all had a wonderful Christmas season. The Christmas Eve pageant went over well. I hope all who attended enjoyed seeing all of the children as our living nativity.

Thank you to all that helped out either with baking, selling, or purchasing our cookies. Youth On a Mission (YOM) raised \$330.00. That will help defray the cost of our annual trip to Monadnock Bible Conference. Please look for an upcoming fundraiser at Applebee's and additional fundraisers so all who wish to attend this "life changing" weekend will be able to. We find ourselves in need of chaperones. Anyone wishing to participate in this weekend, please speak to a Board of Ed member or me. The weekend the kids chose is Feb. 14-16. I find it amazing that the weekend that we celebrate love is the weekend the kids chose to spend their weekend learning about and praising God. Our kids are awesome!

Sunday school is growing and we could always use extra hands. Any Sunday you feel moved to work with the children please just come down and we will put you to good use. You may find out you enjoy it!

I pray that 2014 brings you a year full of blessings and good health. We look to God for guidance and with that guidance we go forth and spread His word.

Jean McPherson
Director of Religious Education





Here We Grow Preschool Welcomes in the New Year

Another year has come and gone and we begin 2014 with renewed enthusiasm. We successfully sang our way through the holidays and are now looking forward to settling in for a long, white winter. Hopefully, you and your families had a wonderful Christmas and are looking forward to the New Year and what it has to offer.

During the month of December *Here We Grow* and First Congregational Church families, in conjunction with the Auburn Police Department, ran a Holiday Gift Collection for ages infants to 16 year olds. As in the past, the children and families were very generous with their donations of toys, games, books, and other items for the older ones (102 items). This is one, small way *Here We Grow* continues as an educational outreach program of First Congregational Church. Thank you for your participation.

Our holiday programs were held on December 19th and 20th with visits from Santa (thank you, Pastor Brian). The 3 and 5-day classes did a great job on stage singing a variety of holiday songs. Once again the 4-year-olds sang and signed "Happy Birthday to Baby Jesus." Our 2-day programs were done a little differently this year, our goal was to avoid the anxiety some children have about getting on stage and performing. We did mini programs in the vestry with just a few family members attending. After the program on December 20th, the staff enjoyed their holiday luncheon at Jasmine's and swapped gifts with each other.

We are busy preparing for the upcoming school year of 2014-2015. Visits will start in January with prospective new students and families. *Here We Grow* will be hosting an "Open House" on March 5, 2014 from 12:30-2:00. This time is set aside for any new families looking for a preschool for their child or re-visits for those who have already been here.

With the holiday break over, I feel we can all settle down for the winter ahead and enjoy the rest of the 2013/14 school year. Until February, stay warm and healthy.

Sincerely,

Dawn Murphy, *Here We Grow* Preschool Director

ESTATE PLANNING?

Have you included the church in your will or estate planning? Please prayerfully consider if the Lord would have you remember your church when completing your will.

"One of the greatest missing teachings in the American church today is the reminder to men and women that nothing we have belongs to us." Gordon MacDonald

I would like to thank all the people of the church for their GREAT generosity. The gifts were wonderful and overwhelming; especially the check I received Christmas Eve.

It is said God loves a cheerful giver. I pray God will bless you all in the next year.

Pastor Brian

POTLUCK SUPPERS & MOVIE/BOOK DISCUSSION TIME

Our monthly potluck supper get-togethers in the vestry (old kitchen) area continue. The potlucks begin at 5:30 p.m. on movie nights with the movie viewing during dinner, and discussion to follow at its conclusion. On book discussion nights, the potluck begins at 6:00 p.m. with the book discussion beginning at approximately 6:30-6:45 p.m. You do NOT have to read the book, if you just want to come for food and fellowship, please do!

Tuesday, Jan. 14 - *Killing Jesus: A History* by Bill O'Reilly - 6 p.m. start

Tuesday, Feb. 18 - *Trees in the Pavement: New Hope in a Free Country* by Jennifer Grosser - 6 p.m. start time

Tuesday, Mar. 18 - *What's So Amazing About Grace?* by Philip Yancey 6 p.m. start time

WORCESTER FELLOWSHIP VOLUNTEER GATHERING

Save the date NOW for Worcester Fellowship's Volunteer gathering on **Saturday, January 25**. We'll meet at Church of the Nativity, 45 Howard Street, in Northborough starting around 9am and end by 2pm. Church of the Nativity is providing us lunch.

This celebration is for all those in your congregation that make Worcester Fellowship happen: sandwich makers, schedule negotiators, sock collectors, party planners, etc. plus, of course, all those who come out to serve lunch and share with our congregation.

More details to come. RSVP to office@worcesterfellowship.org and include any special food needs you may have or restrictions.

-Liz
(The Rev.) Elizabeth M. Magill
www.worcesterfellowship.org

**Tidings 2014
Subscription Renewal Form**

In an effort to offset the costs of publishing the monthly *Tidings*, we are asking for members and friends to support a voluntary subscription.

Your participation is entirely optional and will not affect whether or not you receive the *Tidings*.

Annual Renewal - (10 issues, no July or Aug. issue)

Please enclose a check or money order for \$10 payable to: **First Congregational Church**.

Please write "Tidings" in the memo section.

Mail to: First Congregational Church
128 Central St., Auburn, MA 01501

Name: _____

Address: _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Thank You!

Please call the Church office with any questions, 508-832-2845.

Community Supper

Saturday, January 18th at 5 p.m.

Please join us for a delicious roast beef supper.

Adults \$10 Children \$5

We're hoping church members will stay for supper following the annual meeting at 3 p.m. Of course, we welcome community members as well!

(Volunteers are always needed and appreciated!)

We hope to see you there!



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Phone: (508) 832-2845

Office Hours: Mon.-Fri. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
 Email: secretary@auburnfirstucc.org
 or PastorBrian@auburnfirstucc.org

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doing Christ's work in the world.*

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