



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*

Free Church

The Mayflower Compact and Congregational New England town meetings are the base for American democracy. Town meetings were held in the meeting house which was also the Sunday worship space. This was back when the Congregational Church was the established church in New England.

Established church means you have to be a member of that particular Church group to be a voting citizen. So Quakers, Baptists, or Unitarians were not allowed to vote in New England while Congregational Churches were the established churches. In those days annual town meetings and church meetings were how the government did its business.

Our annual church meeting is a surviving part of that tradition of democracy. I hope you can join us after worship on January 19 for our congregational meeting.

A couple of years ago I wrote:

“Well a new year ends as a new year begins. We had another election ‘The most important in our lifetime.’ I am sure in 2118 many movies will be made about the historic 2018 midterm election. (That is sarcasm. No, I don’t believe even one movie will be made about this election.)”

I think the same thing will happen in 2020. Nothing truly historic will happen. Are there events you think will be historic? I know what the news will say is historic, and I think they are wrong.

Impeachment? Not the Impeachment, it has happened 4 different times before and had little effect on U.S. History. Can you name the other presidents who were impeached or investigated by an impeachment committee? What were the consequences of those impeachments? If you do not know, then they probably were not historic.

The election? I think we will have an election like the last several. Either a Republican or a Democrat will win the White House. But a president can’t get much done without the Congress.

The Democrats will gain or lose a few seats in the House and Senate and the Republicans will gain or lose a few seats in the House or Senate. Neither party will have enough votes to override a Senate filibuster. Without a large majority in the Senate, few bills passed by the house will become law. National politics will be just like it has been for 20+ years.

I think the most important part of the election is not national. Often who we pick as state and local leaders will have a large effect on our lives. Local inspectors, and the ordinances they enforce, have bothered me much more than anything passed in Washington.

I hope you can take time to get involved in local politics. What do you think our town needs? What is it that our commonwealth needs to focus on?

I hope you enjoy this election year.

Pastor Brian

SERMON TITLES:

- 1/5 “The Lost Tribes”
- 1/12 **Pastor Brian is on vacation Jan. 6 - Jan. 13.**
- 1/19 “I Thank God for You”
- 1/26 “When Being Arrested Means Being Convicted”



We are looking to hold **NEW MEMBER CLASSES** beginning January 26th. Classes will be held following the worship service for about 20 minutes on 2 to 3 consecutive Sundays. Please speak with Pastor Brian or a Deacon if interested.



Important Notice

The Annual Meeting will be held following the 10 a.m. worship service on **Sunday, January 19th**. (All committee/board end-of-year reports are **NOW** due.) **The All Committee Meeting** (the first 2020 meeting of all committees and boards) will be on **Tuesday, January 21st, at 7 p.m.** The **Installation of Officers and Board Members** will be during worship on **January 26th**.

Coffee Hour Hosts:

- 1/5 Prudential Committee
- 1/12 Music Committee & Historian
- 1/19 Board of Deacons

Please note: 1/26/20 is the first coffee hour hosted by 2020 committee members. A new coffee hour schedule will be distributed at the All Committee Meeting on Tuesday, January 21st.

Thank you for your generous Christmas gifts. I greatly appreciate your thoughtfulness. Blessings to you in the New Year.

— Pastor Brian

Please pray for Pastor Brian while he's on vacation beginning after worship on January 5 through January 12.

2020 COMMITTEE NOMINEES WANTED

As of this writing, five vacancies still remain on the Board of Deacons (two vacancies of three year terms, 2020-2022 and three vacancies of two year terms 2020-2021). There is one vacancy remaining on the Board of Trustees for a three year term of 2020-2022.

If you are a church member and interested in joining the Board of Deacons or Trustees, please contact one of the Nominating Committee members: Sue MacPhee or Judi Taft. Sue may be reached at 508-832-9347 or email at susiemac2002@gmail.com. Judi may be reached at 508-341-4530 or email at jtaft01527@aol.com.

2019 Pledges

Please note that donations received before Jan. 1st will appear on your 2019 donation statement. Also, any donations received by mail after Jan. 1st may be included on your 2019 donation statement **if** the letter is postmarked on or before Dec. 31st. Any donations postmarked after Dec. 31st will appear on your 2020 donation statement. Thank you!

2020 Offering Envelopes

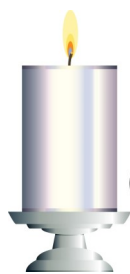
Please pick up your 2020 offering envelopes located at the church in the back of the sanctuary. If you can't find your envelopes, it means you did not make a pledge or didn't indicate that you wanted envelopes. Please see Lori or Nick Stockhaus with any questions.

Happy Birthday to:

Caleb Armstrong	~	Jan. 4th
Lynn Largesse	~	Jan. 6th
Lillian McPherson	~	Jan. 19th
Cassandra Stockhaus	~	Jan. 23rd


Birthdays

We would like to acknowledge your special occasion in the *Tidings* — just complete a birthday/anniversary form located on the table in Fellowship Hall or call 508-832-2845 to have a form mailed to you.



Deaths in Our Church Family

Please pray for the Johnson family due to the recent passing of Lorain Johnson.

Lorain (Fletcher) Johnson, 91, longtime Auburn resident, passed away on Sunday December 22, 2019 in her home surrounded by her loving family.

Lorain is survived by her beloved children, Karen Wojcik and her husband, Theodore; Lynn Shaw; Carl "Skip" Johnson and his wife, Jean; Paula Woelfel and her husband, Frank; Alan Johnson; William Johnson and his wife, Lauri; and Laurel Post; thirteen grandchildren; ten great-grandchildren; several nieces and nephews; and close family friend, Timothy Shaw. Lorain was predeceased by her husband, the late Carl H. Johnson, Jr.; her brothers, the late Basil E. Fletcher, Jr. and Robert M. Fletcher; and her son-in-law, Gary G. Post.

Lorain was born in Worcester, to the late Basil E. and Fanny E. (Magrath) Fletcher. She was raised in Auburn, was a member of the Rainbow Girls, and graduated from Auburn High School in 1946. She met her husband while teaching Sunday School at Pilgrim Congregational Church in Worcester and later settled in her hometown and began to raise their family. She was a devoted and caring mother. In her free time, Lorain enjoyed knitting and reading, was an avid bowler, and a proficient letter writer. She served as a Deaconess and on many committees as well as teaching Sunday School at the First Congregational Church of Auburn. She was a den mother for cub scouts and an active volunteer at the Auburn Little League concession stand. She also was a member of a neighborhood Bible study group. In addition, Lorain volunteered at the Ice Cream Shop at Auburn Life Care Center.

Calling hours are respectfully omitted. A memorial service will be held at 11:00 AM on January 18, 2020 here at the First Congregational Church, 128 Central Street, Auburn, MA. Burial will be held privately for her family in Hillside Cemetery, Auburn. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the First Congregational Church Memorial Fund, 128 Central Street, Auburn, MA 01501.

Also, please pray for **Cliff Peterson's** loved ones due to his passing on December 29th. Funeral arrangements were incomplete at the time of this printing.

POTLUCK SUPPER & DISCUSSION GROUP

Join us for our monthly potluck suppers beginning at 5:30 on movie nights and 6:00 on book discussion nights. On Tuesday, January 28th, we will gather at 6 p.m. to discuss the book of Ruth in the Bible. **All are welcome.** Pastor Brian welcomes your suggestions of books and movies.

Handbell Choir

The handbell choir will be starting up in February for our next round of musical selections for our church services. We would love to have more members join with us in this fun activity.

On Sunday, January 26th, during coffee hour, we will gather to set up the rehearsal dates and times for the next season. If you are interested or considering joining with us, do join us at that time.

Pieces too difficult? Not to worry. Some of our pieces for February and March are going to be quite simple.

Requirements: few! Don't read music? No problem! Several current members of our group do not read music.

Questions: feel free to speak to me at church or give me a call at 508-434-2864.

Herb Mower

Thank you to the congregation for my Christmas present.

Debbie Pranaitis





Dear People of the First Congregational Church of Auburn,

I have been with you now for 10 months, 6 months as Interim Organist and 4 months as permanent Organist/Choir Director. Your welcome has been astounding to me! You have opened your arms and taken me into your community with a generosity I find amazing. My heart is full of gratitude to you for your warm reception.

The adult choir has worked hard and willingly to bring you beautiful music every week. The highlight of their work this fall was the Cantata that was presented with success on December 15th. Their commitment to the weekly rehearsals made it possible. This commitment is an ongoing gift to you, their church family, and it makes me happy to serve as their leader in this endeavor.

The children started rehearsing again in October and learned several Christmas hymns which they sang in their Christmas pageant. I plan to continue working with them every week to prepare for the Easter festivities. "Upward and onward" as the saying goes!

I hope you have a Blessed New Year filled with the peace that only God can give.

With deep gratitude,
Paulette LaBarre

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION — JANUARY 2020

Happy New Year! I pray your Christmas was full of love and family. The New Year brings the opportunity to start fresh. Make new commitments to share the love of Jesus in your own unique way every day.

Thank you to everyone who participated in our Christmas Eve pageant. It is a great way to remember "the reason for the season" as well as create wonderful memories.

YOUTH ON A MISSION

January 5th meeting after church in the green room, bring your pause book and Bible. ALL MONADNOCK PAPERWORK IS DUE BY THIS MEETING.

January 25 - spaghetti supper fundraiser

The youth group will be hosting a community spaghetti supper that includes, spaghetti with plain or meat sauce, salad, bread, and dessert. The cost is \$10.00 for adults and kids under 10 are free.

February 2nd - Monadnock meeting WITH PARENTS in the green room after service.

The Sunday school has a weekly offering during class. I have envelopes if you need them or the children can grab one before we take the offering in class. Currently we are looking into children's programs that could benefit from this offering.

I pray that 2020 will be a year full of Jesus moments and happy times.

With His guidance and wisdom we serve,
Jean McPherson, Director of Religious Education

I want to thank the congregation for my special Christmas gift. I feel very blessed to work with your children year after year. It is so amazing to watch them grow in their faith journey. Thank you for the confidence and opportunity to be a part of this journey. I pray you all have a year full of blessings.

Jean McPherson

January Tidings from Here We Grow Preschool



Happy New Year! We hope you all had a wonderful and relaxing holiday. Now that the cold weather has settled in, we will be having our gross motor time in the vestry. We feel so blessed to have this space available to us; most schools in our area do not have such a wonderful space.

Our 3-year-olds had their Christmas programs on Dec. 19th with a sing-along in the classrooms with family and friends. The 4-year-olds had their concert the morning of Dec. 20; a great time was had by all and parents were very generous with the goodies for our 4-year-old parties. We hope some of you were able to stop by and see the children perform; they worked very hard learning new songs and singing some old favorites. A big thank you to Pastor Brian for playing Santa for the 3-year-old children and to my husband for coming to play Santa for the 4-year-olds; the children love to see Santa come to school.

This year we again collected toys in conjunction with the Auburn Police Department's "Secret Santa" program. Family support was great; we filled our large box multiple times and were able to help make the holiday special for some Auburn families.

Enrollment forms for next year have gone out for in-house registration and we are already filling spots. We will continue with in-house enrollment until the middle of February, then we will open it up to new parents and children. If you know of anyone looking for a preschool, we would be happy to hear from them. Open House will take place March 3, 2020, 9-11 a.m.

In February families will be selling tickets for our calendar raffle fundraiser. Beginning March 1st, we will be picking a winner every day for 31 days. If you would like a chance at winning some great prizes, please speak with a parent or staff member. Denise will have a sample calendar in the office. A big thank you to Katie Sharr for once again leading this fabulous fundraiser for us.

We wish everyone a Happy New Year!

The Here We Grow Staff

THANK YOU!

I wish I could think of a fresh, new way to thank you for your generosity in remembering me at Christmas time. I just hope somehow you realize how much I appreciate your thoughtfulness. Wishing each of you and yours much joy and wellness in the New Year. — Denise Jobin, Church Secretary

To my Church Family,

Thank you for your generous gift. Your thoughtfulness is very much appreciated.

— Judy Bjork

Library Notes....

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Usborne Book eFair in November. It was a great success for the children of the church and the Here We Grow Program. Through your generosity our FCC Children's Library received over \$500 in new books!! This was through (1) your purchase of books off our "Wish List" for the library, (2) cash donations for me to purchase books and (3) our receipt of 50% proceeds on all books you ordered for the children in your lives. Simply amazing!! A win/win for everyone...

As Church Librarian, a sincere thank you on behalf of the children as well as a special Shout Out of Thanks to Michelle Bigelow for assisting with the "Facebook" part of this (which I know nothing about) and Kellye Riani, our Usborne Consultant.



Michele Schillinger

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” - [John 13:34-35](#)

This year, my New Year’s resolution will be to always come from a place of love. To put aside what and who I “like” and “do not like.” To just love!

I am so grateful to be a part of our Outreach Committee. We have been a beautiful vehicle for showing love without judgement. From those who are recovering their life after a prison sentence to those who battle addiction. From local mothers suffering from cancer to our neighbors in the South devastated by natural disaster. We give to those in need, without question, without contempt. That is love.

Outreach has closed out the year with our Advent calendars and collection for a “to be determined” charitable contribution to benefit those who need housing-related assistance.

We used up our budget, but as always, YOU showed up for us! And WE get to give just a little more. Keep your eyes open for more information as we tally up your generous donations!

Thank you! From all of us at Outreach to all of our church family. We are so blessed to be able to give in such abundance. We are so blessed to have one another!

Happy New Year and remember to always try to choose love!!!!

Shannon Hartmann on behalf of the Board of Christian Outreach

With God, All Things Are Possible...

Thank you, everyone!

As of December 30, First Congregational Church had received 80 pledges and 5 donations for a total of \$125,926.

We look forward to serving in fellowship with you this year.

In His Love,
Your Stewardship Committee

“You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you.” Psalm 128:2



Happy New Year!

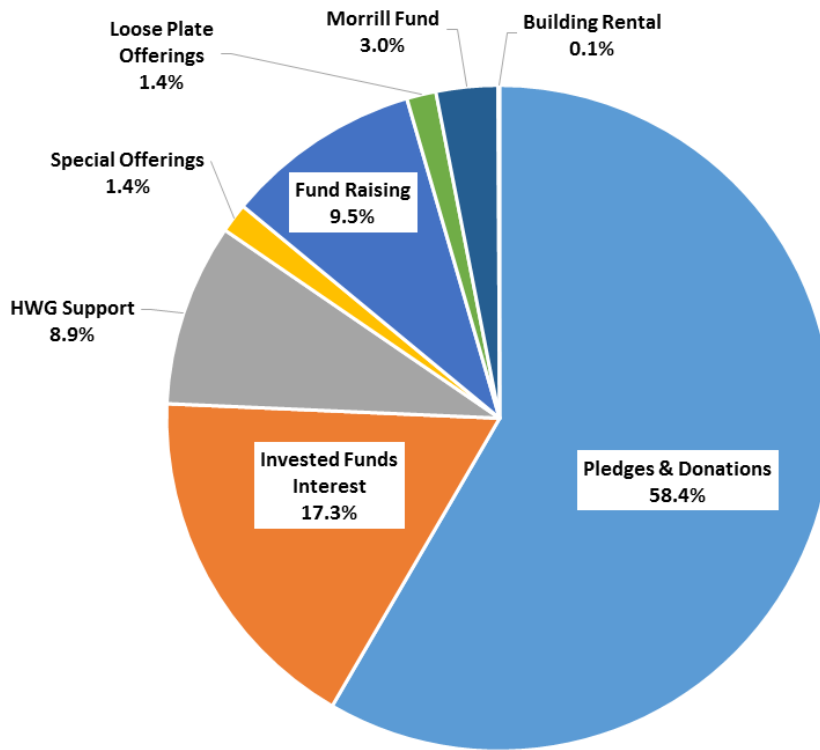
Happy, Healthy New Year! January is Cervical Health Awareness Month, National Birth Defects Prevention Month, National Glaucoma Awareness Month, and Thyroid Awareness Month.

I have an appointment marked on my calendar for an echocardiogram on Monday, January 13th, for 2pm with a 1pm pick up time. I didn't write anyone's name, so if you have an echo scheduled for that day, I am prepared to take you, but I need to know who to pick up. Please call me at 508-612-4521, or, if you think of someone it could be, please let me know. Thank you.

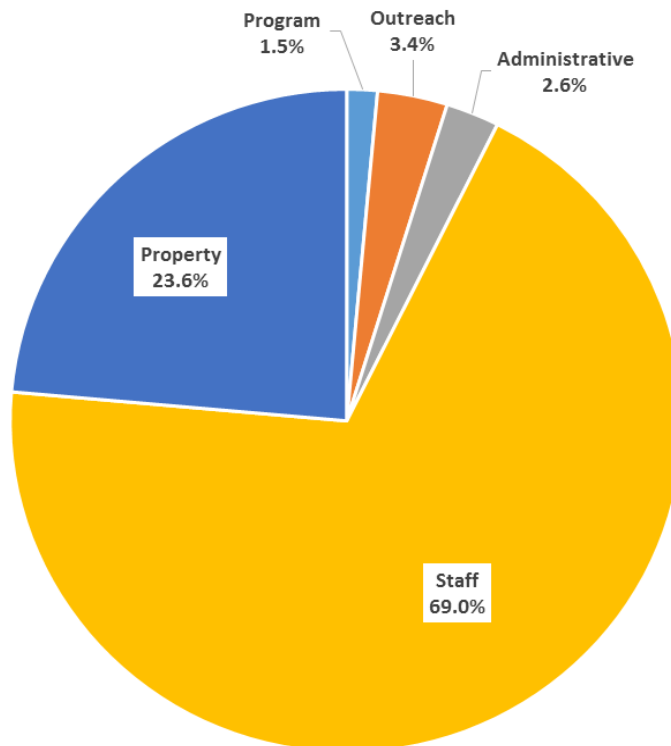
Please remember the medical equipment in the closet. The closet is quite full, but items come and go, so feel free to check.

God Bless!
Debbie Pranaitis, Parish Nurse

First Congregational Church - Income 2019



First Congregational Church - Expenses 2019





Pasta Dinner

COMMUNITY SUPPER

**Saturday, January 25th,
at 5 p.m.**

Please join us for a
delicious pasta supper.

**Adults \$10
Children 10 & under – free**

Please support this YOUTH GROUP fundraiser!

TIDINGS is a monthly publication of

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*God's church in Auburn Center
doing Christ's work in the world.*

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OR CURRENT RESIDENT