



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 March, it is time for Lent. Lent is the 40 days (not counting Sundays) that precedes Easter. It is a traditional time to prepare for Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Over the years, Christians have prepared in many ways. They have followed special diets, most popularly meatless Fridays. They have gone on pilgrimages, and added prayer to their daily routine.

So what are you going to do to prepare for Easter? May I suggest visiting people? As I write this, the Covid restrictions are being eased. It seems Covid will be with us for years to come but, hopefully, the worst of the disease is behind us.

Many people have suffered with depression and anxiety. I know I have. I am unsure if I will ever feel comfortable in a full baseball stadium or a big gymnasium for a basketball game again, but that does not mean I will stop going to ball games. I will just take precautions that I never thought of before 2020.

Going to games is fun, and we should be careful to not be isolated. Isolation and loneliness, we know, are killers. It is used to torture prisoners, drive them insane. A lonely senior is likely to suffer worse dementia than a more social person.

But even knowing that, I had worries when I went to my clergy group. I have known these pastors for 10 years, yet seeing them in person again made me nervous. Was I right to be nervous or was it overreacting? That is a decision we all make for ourselves and our families.

Our kids, especially, have been brave. Though the virus seems to not make kids extremely sick, they have had to do Zoom school and wear masks almost everywhere they go. They did this to help slow the spread to older people. People for whom Covid was a life and death worry.

I think now is the time to let kids be free of those restrictions. Set them free to run and yell with friends once more. Let kids make new friends. Childhood was a great time for me to make friends.

“Want to play tag?” I’d ask.
“Yes!” a new kid would say.

And just like that, I had a new friend.

I fear this epidemic has made all of us less willing to approach strangers. Fear of Covid has reinforced our fear of new people. That is sad.

May God help us make new friends and strengthen old friendships.

Pastor Brian

MARCH SERMON TOPICS

- March 2 “Ash Wednesday”
- March 6 “A Wandering Aramean”
- March 13 “Thinking Differently”
- March 20 “God’s Plan Versus the World As It Is”
- March 27 “Which Son Sinned Worse?”



DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME BEGINS MARCH 13TH.

Remember to set your clocks ahead one hour when retiring on Saturday evening, March 12th.

MARCH



BIRTHDAYS

Happy Birthday to:

3/9 - Paula Bigelow

3/16 - MacKenzie Young

3/26 - Jean McPherson

3/28 - Ryan Minor

3/29 - Everett Webb

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH'S SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS

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 contact Denise in the church office at 508-832-2845 or email secretary@auburnfirststucc.org to request an application.

APPLICATIONS ARE DUE BY APRIL 15TH.

PLEASE NOTE: The bell choir has resumed rehearsals as of February 27th. Anyone interested in learning more about the bell choir is welcome to join them on Sundays at 2 p.m.

FROM THE BOARD OF CHRISTIAN OUTREACH

Outreach had its first official meeting of the year on Tuesday, February 15th. We've got a great committee this year and are looking forward to serving our God, our Church, and our community in 2022.

Our first two donations of the year will be going to "The Audio Journal" and "Veterans Inc". Two wonderful nonprofits that do great work.

We often get multiple requests from the charities we have donated to in the past. These charities all serve a vital role in our communities. Going forward, we would like to know if there's any nonprofit agency or program you would like to see the Outreach Committee support. If there's a program that's important to you, it's important to us. Please speak to any Outreach committee member: Cindy Dube, Judi Taft, Debbie Pranaitis, Judy Murphy, Sheila Skog, and Jennifer Bohn. We would love to hear from you.

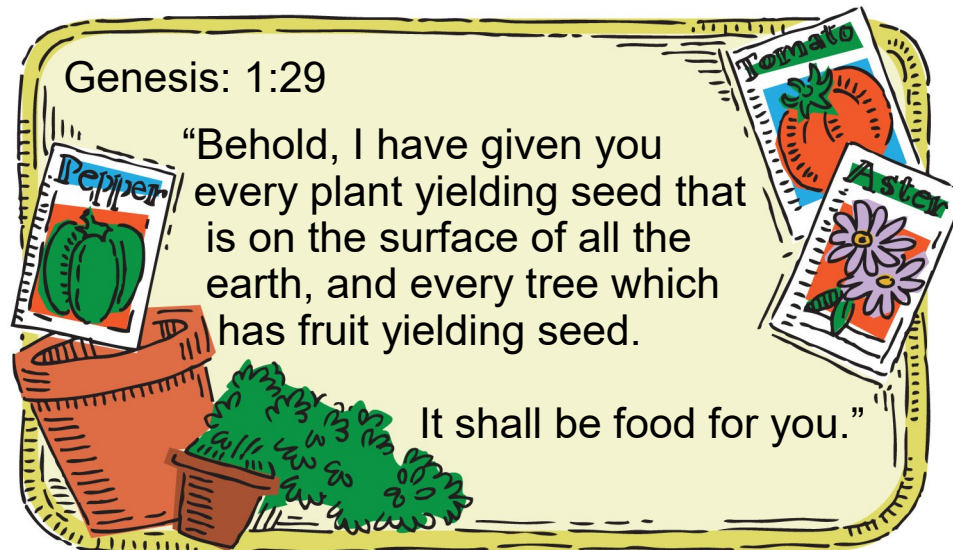
More good news..... **The Palm Sunday Breakfast is BACK!!** As we have done in the past (pre-Covid), we will serve a free-will donation breakfast at 8:30AM on Sunday, April 10th. Our guest speaker this year has yet to be confirmed at this time, but we will let you know when we know. So looking forward to seeing everyone at this familiar event.

In HIS Service

Your Outreach Committee

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

March is here!!!! Spring is so close; I can almost smell it. In my house, I have already started to plant seeds for broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage (not the puppy, the vegetable!!!). My hope is that by the end of March, I can get them in the ground outside, because these plants love the chilly nights and cold dirt. Planting seeds inside, when there is still snow on the ground outside, and knowing I will harvest when the days are warm, is a very comforting feeling for me. For many reasons. Partly because it gives me an opportunity to watch the miracle of life! When our eyes are open, we see miracles all over! A tiny seed grows to nourish my family... That is incredible to me and something I am grateful for each year. Another reason planting seeds is comforting to me, is because it gets me out of my winter funk! I know that very soon it will be warm enough to be playing in the dirt. Lastly, as it says in the Bible, seeds are a gift, a blessing bestowed on us from God!



I would like very much to plant some seeds with the children in Sunday School and leave them to grow in the windowsill. I am waiting for the temperature to go up just a bit.

February proved to be quite successful for our little Sunday School group. While attendance has still been very low, and our groups are quite small, I feel that there is forward progress. I also feel that those who are here, are learning and growing! We implemented a new activity this month. The Sunday School children and I are leading the church in a prayer during coffee hour. That prayer signifies the end of class for the day. I have been extremely pleased with how well this is going. Any time the children have a reason to interact with the rest of the congregation, and vice versa, we are winning!!! The children are winning! Our bonds are growing stronger, with each other and God!

Our “make-up YOM Christmas sleepover” was this past Friday. We had a great time with a good number of children participating. In fact, the boys wanted to stay longer on Saturday morning! Thanks to Pastor Brian for making us a yummy pancake breakfast and thanks to all the families that brought goodies!

Thank you to everyone who came to me after church about volunteering with the children. You absolutely made my day... made my week!!!! I am so grateful for you! I will be in touch with a calendar of dates! Anyone is welcome to help or hang out with us downstairs!

Thank you to the entire congregation for all your love and support! I love you all so much!

Please contact me if you have any good ideas regarding activities and outreach opportunities for the children. Especially for the spring and summer. I hope to keep us a little active while SS is out for the summer!

Peace and Love

~Shannon Hartmann

Please keep the following families in your prayers.

Ray J. Litman, 14, beloved Auburn student, passed away unexpectedly on Monday, January 10, 2022. He is survived by his loving Nana and primary caretaker, Alice M. Litman, of Auburn; his siblings, Janet Kennard, Teresa Walker, and Brian, David, and Jonathan Judkins; and many cousins. A funeral service was held on January 20th at Faith Church in Auburn, MA.

Eugene C. Seuss, 83, of Auburn, passed away peacefully on February 13 in the care of his loving family. Gene leaves his beloved companion Claire Lussier of Auburn, MA, his daughter Lynda J. Seuss and her husband Joel A. Rodgers and his son David A. Seuss, predeceased by their mother, Paula A. (Choquette) Seuss; beloved stepchildren Karen B. Merrill, Steven P. Merrill and his wife Carolyn A. Merrill, predeceased by their mother and Gene's wife, Judith L. (Bennett) Seuss, and three adored grandsons Kyle, T.J. and Tyler Merrill.

Eugene was born in Worcester, MA, son of Edith (Lonczewski) Seuss and Eugene Seuss. He graduated from Worcester Academy in 1956 and later earned a B.S. in Finance from Clark University. Gene was also in the U.S. Army Reserve during the Cuban Missile Crisis, stationed at Fort Knox, KY.

As a young adult, Gene worked at Seuss Dental Prosthetics, his father's business in Worcester. Gene started his career in Finance as a Certified Public Accountant at George A. Smith and Company, later became a Partner at Main, Hurdman, & Cranston, and served as Chief Financial Officer at R.W. Granger for nearly 20 years.

Gene was an avid golfer and could often be found on the golf course at Pleasant Valley Country Club in Sutton, MA., where he was a long-time member. Gene and his wife, Judi, enjoyed travelling, golfing, and downhill skiing. Gene, his wife, Paula, his children, Lynda and David, and Barney their Scottish Terrier, enjoyed spending time at their summer home that Gene built near Thompson Lake in Otisfield, Maine.

Gene was dedicated to public service and fellowship throughout his life, serving as President of both the Kiwanis Club of Auburn and South Worcester, later becoming Lt. Governor within the New England District, and recognized as a Kiwanis George E. Hixson Fellow. Following his retirement, Gene was a financial consultant, served as Treasurer of the Retired Men's Club of Greendale, and delivered meals through the Meals on Wheels program based at the Auburn Senior Center. Gene's family have been members of the First Congregational Church in Auburn for more than 50 years.

Gene's family would like to share their heartfelt gratitude for the folks at Care Central VNA & Hospice, Inc., and Laura's Guardian Angels, for their loving care and support. The family will hold a celebration of Gene's life later this spring, and will announce details near that time.

Please be in prayer for the McPherson Family due to the recent passing, on February 16, of Jean's dad, **Albert Daniel "Dan" Whitney Jr.**, 91, of Shrewsbury. Dan was born in Worcester MA on December 22, 1930, to Albert and Gladys (Lovely) Whitney Sr. Dan attended Worcester Public schools and graduated from Commerce High school and Worcester Junior College. He had a long career as a draftsman at Wyman Gordon Company in Grafton, MA before retiring in 1992.

Dan leaves behind four children, Deborah Schuetz, Jean (Rich) McPherson, David (Laurie) Whitney and Lin Whitney, and his nine grandchildren: Derek, Lillian, Jacob, Daniel, Almicar, Haydn, Katherine, Matthew, and Rebecca. Dan was predeceased by his loving wife of 60 years, Katherine L. (Dube), his parents, his daughter Patricia, and his grandson Devin.

Per Dan's wishes, there will be no formal services but in the spring his family will gather in his beloved gardens to celebrate and honor his life.

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.’” — John 11:25 (NIV®)



March is Multiple Sclerosis Education and Awareness Month, National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, National Endometriosis Awareness Month, and National Kidney Month. It's also National Traumatic Brain Injury Awareness Month, Save Your Vision Month, and Workplace Eye Wellness Month.

March 8-14 is National Pulmonary Rehabilitation Week

March 13-19 is Patient Safety Awareness Week

March 14-20 is National Sleep Awareness Week, National Poison Prevention Week

March 21-27 is National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week

March 3 is World Birth Defects Day

March 10 is World Kidney Day

March 18 is World Sleep Day

March 20 is World Oral Health Day

March 26 is American Diabetes Alert Day and Epilepsy Awareness Day.

Soon spring will be here. God's beauty will be awakening and His flowers and trees will be alive with color. We have to take care of ourselves and one way is to take time to appreciate the beauty.

God Bless!

Debbie Pranaitis, Parish Nurse, Cell #: 508-612-4521

REMINDER: OUR **ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE** WILL BE HELD ON MARCH 2ND AT 7 P.M. ALL ARE WELCOME.

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, American Pastor & Teacher



I would like to thank everyone for all the prayers and cards.

Sincerely,
Alice Litman



COMMUNITY YARD SALE—PLANT SALE!!!

SATURDAY, JUNE 11TH ~ 8 A.M. TO 1 P.M. ~ RAIN OR SHINE

Do you have an accumulation of things that are just too good to throw away, but you no longer need? Don't have enough to hold your own yard sale? Store those items and plan to join us on the Church lawn for **OUR COMMUNITY YARD SALE on June 11th!** As we've done in the past, we will rent spaces and tables, plus we'll do all the advertising and remember, our prime location can't be beat! We will also have a church table and will be accepting donations as the date draws near. Please **NO** computer equipment, TV's, clothing, or VCR tapes.

So, please mark your calendars and plan to support this church fundraiser by renting a space or volunteering to help at the yard sale - plant sale.

SPACES ARE \$20 FOR CHURCH MEMBERS & \$25 FOR NON-MEMBERS.

TABLES ARE AVAILABLE TO RENT FOR \$5 EACH.

Last year the return of our Community Yard Sale/Plant Sale was so successful that we had to implement a wait list! We anticipate the same level of interest again this year, so don't delay in reserving your spot.

We are very excited at the thought of gathering, again, with our church family and our neighbors on the church's front lawn. Call Cindy Dube at 508-832-6646 or the church office, 508-832-2845, to reserve your spot!

2022 COMMITTEE NOMINEES STILL NEEDED

At our Annual Meeting in January, the Nominating Committee presented their report with the new and recommended nominees to Boards and Committees. **However, openings still remain.**

BOARD OF DEACONS: Listed in our bylaws there should be 12 Deacons; however, if two vacancies of 3 year terms could be filled, then the Deacons would utilize age appropriate acolytes for the church service only.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES: two vacancies - one vacancy of 1 year term and one vacancy of 2 year term.

MUSIC COMMITTEE: two vacancies of 2 year terms.

BOARD OF EDUCATION: one vacancy of 3 year term.

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE: one vacancy of 3 year term.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE: one vacancy

THANK YOU to all who have already committed to joining one or more of our various committees and boards. If you are a church member and interested in filling a nomination, please contact one of the Nominating Committee Members. Sheila Skog may be reached at 978-387-7705 or sheilaskog@gmail.com. Sue MacPhee may be reached at 508-864-2454 or email susiemac2002@gmail.com. Or, call the church office at 508-832-2845. Thank you for your help!

Note: we continue to put forth a plea to church members to consider filling the role of clerk, a church officer position. Our thanks to Sheila Skog who is currently serving as acting clerk while a replacement is found.

Here We Grow Preschool



We are just over halfway through our school year and, as always, staff and families of Here We Grow have been absolutely amazing. I cannot say often enough how much I appreciate everyone's patience, understanding and flexibility with the constantly changing guidance from both state and local officials.

Our **Prize Calendar Fundraiser** will begin March 7; once again, we have some fantastic prizes available. Thank you to all who donated. Denise will have some calendars available in the office if you would like to purchase one. The children will start pulling names April 1st, and we will post the winners in the Here We Grow entryway.

If you have a friend or family member looking for a preschool for their little one, we would love to meet them. We will, once again, be hosting an Open House on Tuesday, March 1, from 9-11 AM. If they are unable to attend, please have them call or email the school (508-832-8184 or director@herewegrowpreschool.com). We are still doing tours nights and weekends. Remember, children can start at 2 years, 9 months and do not have to be potty trained. At this time we still have quite a bit of availability in all of our classes. With the availability of the vaccine and the public schools loosening restrictions, we are hopeful that our year will look a little more "normal" in the fall.

We are planning on running our annual summer program this year. Here We Grow will once again be offering 2 weeks of fun, June 21-25, and June 28-July 1; our hours will be 9-1:30. This is open to children ages 4-9 and 3-year-olds who have completed a year of preschool. Children do not have to attend Here We Grow to attend our summer program.

Cristi Corey, Director
Here We Grow Preschool



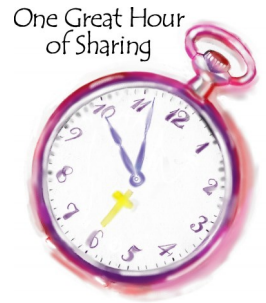
Traditionally, we would have the Easter plant order form in the March *Tidings*; however, with rising fuel costs, etc., Colonial Gardens could not give us a price at this time for the plants they can offer this year. As soon as we have the plant availability and pricing, we will create this year's order form and send it out via email to all those who normally receive the *Tidings* and have an email address on file with the church office.

The delay in receiving pricing/availability information will result in a shorter window in which to order plants this year. Please be on the lookout for the "Easter Plant Order Form" email from the church and place your orders accordingly.

Please note: if you are not receiving weekly emails from the church office, then we most likely do not have your email address on file. Please forward your email address to Denise, the church secretary, at secretary@auburnfirstucc.org if you would like an Easter plant form emailed to you. Be sure to include "Easter Plant" in the subject line of your email request.

Thank you,
Michele

One Great Hour of Sharing — Love Responds



The One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) special mission offering of the United Church of Christ involves you in disaster, refugee/immigration, and development ministries throughout the world. When a disaster strikes or people are displaced or made refugees by violence or extreme poverty, you are part of the immediate response and of the long-term recovery.

Through OGHS you engage in holistic development programs including health care, education, agriculture, food sustainability, micro-financing and women’s empowerment. Because the UCC relates in mutual partnership to churches and organizations through Global Ministries and worldwide response and recovery networks, your contributions to One Great Hour of Sharing put you in the right place at the right time for the relief, accompaniment and recovery of the most vulnerable. You meet immediate needs and you address the underlying causes that create those needs in the first place.

You’ll find offering envelopes enclosed in this month’s *Tidings*. Please drop it in the offering plate on Sunday or mail to: First Congregational Church, 128 Central St., Auburn, MA 01501. Thank you!

TIDINGS is a monthly publication of

**First Congregational Church,
United Church of Christ
128 Central St., Auburn MA 01501**

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doing Christ’s work in the world.*

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OR CURRENT RESIDENT