



MAY 2023

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

“Memories”

We come again to May. A month of blooming. A month of warming. A month of flowers, and the month for Memorial Day.

The first Memorial Day was called Decoration Day and was observed the 30th of May 1868. It was first observed 3 years after the Civil War ended. (The Civil War ended May 5, 1865.) The holiday started as a call to decorate the graves of the union dead. May 30th was picked because all parts of the country would have flowers in bloom by the end of May. It wasn't until 1971 that Memorial Day was observed on the last Monday of May and recognized as an official federal holiday in remembrance of all members of the U.S. military who fought and died in service.

The original declaration by Major General John A. Logan, Commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, wrote in part, “with the choicest flowers of springtime: We should guard their graves with sacred vigilance. ... Let pleasant paths invite the coming and going of reverent visitors and fond mourners. Let no neglect, no ravages of time, testify to the present or to the coming generations that we have forgotten as a people the cost of a free and undivided republic.”

I think often of our Veterans as I see the graves of Union Veterans buried in “The Old Burial Grounds” beside our church. Memorial Day is a day to say “Thank You” to those who have “given that last measure of devotion.”

Some of the earliest human remains have been found in states that suggest they were carefully buried. Pollen has been found with the remains to show plants and flowers were laid next to the body in the grave. Flowers, in or at the grave, seem to be a worldwide custom.

I imagine that, like flower blooms, we wish life lasted longer. And, like flowers, life is beautiful, though fleeting.

I pray this May is full of blooming flowers. I pray May brings pleasant memories of loved ones who have gone to their reward. Lastly, I pray that when we are gone, we too are remembered with fondness and reverence. Amen.

God Bless,

Pastor Brian



MAY SERMON TITLES

- May 7 Communion Sunday - “Show Us the Father”
- May 14 Mother’s Day - “Love Has Rules”
- May 21 Choir Appreciation & Baptism Sunday - “Authority for Eternal Life”
- May 28 Memorial Day - “Showing Steadfast Love to the Thousandth Generation of Those Who Love Me”





Carole & Bob Murray will be celebrating their special day on May 4th. Happy Anniversary, Bob & Carole!

Paul and Diane Moore will be celebrating their anniversary on May 10th. Congratulations, Paul and Diane!

Coffee Hour Hosts

5/7 Bev Geddes & **Volunteer Needed***

5/14 **Volunteers Needed***

5/21 Board of Deacons

5/28 Board of Trustees & Prudential Committee

*** If you would like to help with coffee hour, please see the sign-up sheet in fellowship hall.**

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

Please mark your calendars for **Sunday, June 11th**, and plan to join us as we celebrate our children on

CHILDREN’S SUNDAY.



Following our service that day we will be having our annual picnic. We will be looking for donations of desserts and salads to complement the burgers and dogs supplied by the Board of Ed. Please look for a sign-up sheet in fellowship hall as the date approaches.

Church World Service (CWS) Blankets Program

When difficult times happen, a kind and loving response can make all the difference. That’s why the CWS Blankets Program was created—to give a kind, loving and tangible response to someone facing a difficult time, reminding them that they are not alone. Through the generosity of CWS partner organizations, congregations and individual supporters, our most vulnerable neighbors around the world can feel safe and keep warm with fresh linens and clean sleeping quarters. When our neighbors are in need, even \$10 for a single blanket goes a long way. If you would like to make a donation, checks should be payable to the church with “CWS Blankets” in the memo section and may be placed in the offering plate on Sundays or mailed directly to the church at 128 Central St., Auburn, MA 01501.

Cards are available if you would like to make a donation in honor of a family member.

CALLING ALL SOON TO BE GRADUATES . . .



If you are aware of any students with ties to First Congregational who will be graduating this spring, please email Denise at: secretary@auburnfirststucc.org or call the Church office, (508) 832-2845. Please include where they’re graduating from and when, details of their future plans, and list family members (parents/grandparents) who are known within the church. We plan to acknowledge our graduates in the June *Tidings* and a future bulletin.

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The start of a new season is always exciting; especially when this new season brings us outside! Spring represents a fresh start. Beginning with the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we say "goodbye" to the sins of the winter and hello to forgiveness and a clean slate. April has typically been the month that brings us a lot of rain needed for the growth of flowers and vegetation we see in May (you know the old saying, "April showers bring May flowers!"). After the rain always comes the rainbow.

In our elementary class, the kids have learned the story of Noah and the Ark (found in Genesis Chapter 7). I never realized, before preparing this lesson, that this story can be very dark and scary. The destruction of all living creatures is a hard concept for little minds to understand. Teaching them that we all have sin, we all make mistakes, but God forgives us... seems like a contradiction to this story. Of course, adults and the older children understand that further down the timeline Jesus arrived to save us from that sin!!! Noah was many, many generations before Jesus. In keeping the lesson focused on God's love, not His powers of destruction, the lesson focused on 2 concepts. (1) God loved Noah and his family and they were spared. The boat, or ark that Noah was instructed to build (step by step) literally carried them through the storm. (2) The rainbow! God promised us that he would never flood the earth again and He solidified this promise by giving us the rainbow! Children and adults alike are always mesmerized by the incredible beauty of all those bright colors sitting in the sky. ALWAYS after a storm! So the lesson here is that God loves us and He is always around us. Look for His miracles all around you. Look for the "rainbow" no matter how scary your "storm" seems. God is with you always, He never leaves your side! You are never alone!

Our Junior High class is learning some deeper concepts when it comes to the Bible. Currently we are discussing, "Is the Bible real?" Understanding truths versus lies. In the short amount of time I have spent in this role, researching (lightly) and speaking with other Christians, I learned that people fall into (2) basic categories. One that believes the Bible is an accurate historical account. The words in the Bible are God's Word. Every story is real and we are to use this book to help guide us on our journey with God. The other category are those that believe, while the Bible does contain some historical accuracy, much of it is not to be read in literal terms. They believe the Bible is full of symbolism and needs to be interpreted. Which category do you fall into? That is the question we raise to our youth. They do not have that answer yet. They are growing up in a season filled with distractions, and many are trying to navigate through self-doubt during this phase of their lives. It is a difficult and scary time for them. I thank the Lord every day for the opportunity to help them navigate through these times and herd them toward the Bible. Whichever category they fall into, I want them to turn to the Bible for answers and turn to God through prayer.

As we turn to God through prayer in Sunday School this May, we will be saying prayers of gratitude for all our mothers. Exodus 20:12 is quite clear about how we are to treat both our mother and father. With honor. The Bible does not promise that all mothers will be perfect. We are, after all, only human. Despite the imperfections of our mothers, God still wants us to honor them. Mothers are the vessels that God chose to create life. Those that may not be biologically born from their mother, should offer that same honor. She was chosen too!

Thank you for the continued commitment from Michele and Lilly in the Sunday School classes. And thank you to the BOCE and all the congregation for your support!!!

Blessings of love,

Shannon Hartmann, Director of Religious Education





Here We Grow Preschool

It doesn't seem possible that it is already May and we are entering the last full month of our school year. It feels like we were just greeting a new group of children and staff.

As we begin to look to next year, we are happy to say that at this time all of our teachers are returning in the fall. However, we are looking for some support staff. Do you play an instrument? Do you sing? Do you know someone who does? Here We Grow is looking for a music teacher for the 2023-24 school year. We would love someone to come in once a month to lead the children in song. College students are welcome; we will work with the right candidate. We always have a need for subs, as well, no experience necessary.

As the last full month of our school year begins, I wanted to share some of our favorite activities that get the kids up and moving, especially on these cool, rainy spring days. Building an obstacle course, either indoors or outside, is a lot of fun and simple to do using everyday items. Dancing, just put on any music and get grooving, or play the freeze dance by randomly stopping the music and striking a pose. To practice shape/letter/number recognition, write numbers/letters or draw shapes on the driveway and hop from one to another and call out the name of what you land on.

Some other less active activities that we love, Playdoh! It is so great for increasing finger/hand strength as well as their imaginations. Add some child-safe scissors to the Playdoh and practice cutting. Getting a lot of junk mail? Let your littles help rip it up. Show them how to use their pointer and thumb to grab the top of the paper and tear, such a huge lesson to learn, especially when it comes to opening juice box straws. I love using washable markers on my windows or sliding glass door; we play tic-tac-toe, practice letter/number formation, or just draw pictures, and it's so easy to clean. And always, Read! Read! Read! There is nothing better.

We still have openings for the 2023-24 school year; if you know of anyone looking for a great preschool experience, please send them our way. This year we are offering a 3-year-old class on Mondays and Fridays, 9-11:30, as well as our traditional Tuesday/Thursday option.

On May 22 we will begin collecting linens for our final Savers clothing/linens/book drive of the school year. Once again, we can accept clothes, shoes, belts, purses, sheets, blankets, curtains, etc. as well as books. **Please put all linen items in bags and all books in boxes.** As you may recall, this is a fundraiser for the preschool. Bags and boxes will be weighed and we will be compensated based upon the total bags/boxes donated.

Happy Mother's Day and, as always, thank you for your continued support of Here We Grow.

Stay safe and healthy —

Cristi Corey, Director
Here We Grow Preschool





May is Arthritis Awareness Month, Healthy Vision Month, Mental Health Awareness Month, and National Osteoporosis Month. It is also National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, National Stroke Awareness Month, Skin Cancer Awareness Month, Lyme Disease Awareness Month and Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month.

May 2 is World Asthma Day

May 10 is World Lupus Day

May 14-20 is National Women's Health Week

May 31 is World No Tobacco Day

Signs of a Stroke: F = Face, one side is drooping
A = Arm weakness
S = Speech difficulty
T = Time

If a person has these symptoms, call for help immediately! There's medication that may help if given soon after these symptoms appear.

God Bless!

Deb Pranaitis, Parish Nurse, cell # 508-612-4521

When separating perennials in your gardens, please keep the **PLANT SALE** in mind and pot up a few to donate. The plants are a huge part of the church's profits! Please be sure to LABEL each pot with the plant name. We're hoping this will be the first year we have no "mystery" plants. A big seller is RHUBARB! . . . cut and bundle in 6 stalks. Also, please remember to support Christine on Whittemore St. in Leicester as she donates lots and lots of plants to us.



SAVE THE DATE!

Take me out to the ball game! Join us for a church outing to the **Woo Sox baseball game on June 21**, which is Auburn Night at Polar Park. The BOCE is hoping to achieve their goal of connecting our youth with our adult members through common interests where they can enjoy fellowship outside of the church setting. Katie Sharr, of the Board of Ed, has arranged for a special link to allow church members to purchase tickets in the same section of the ball park. The link was included in the church-wide email that was sent on May 1st. If you don't currently receive church emails, call the office to have the link emailed to you.



We are pleased to announce the birth of Daniel Scott Davis, the son of Brian and Sarah Davis of Taylors, SC. Daniel was born Saturday, April 1st, weighing in at 8 lbs., 7 oz. Proud grandparents are Kimberly and Robert Davis and great-grandparents, Jeanne and Sam Avallone and the late Marjorie and Robert G. Johnson. We pray God's continued blessing upon Daniel and his family.

ATTN: AUBURN SENIORS YOU'RE INVITED!



PASTA
Dinner

**SATURDAY,
MAY 13
AT 4:00 P.M.**

Here at First Congregational Church

**CALL FOR YOUR
COMPLIMENTARY TICKETS**

508-832-2845

From the Music Committee --

Thank you so much to our chancel (voice) choir and bell choir for a wonderful year! A special thank you to Paulette and Herb for your talent and leadership. We hope that everyone can join us for **Choir Appreciation Sunday on May 21.**

And speaking of choirs, they love newcomers! Please give some serious thought to trying something new this fall. The bell choir is always looking for new members -- and you don't need to know how to read music. The chancel (voice) choir is particularly in need of new members. They do an amazing job now, but imagine how more voices could add to the repertoire. And it would allow more flexibility for the current members. We all understand how important music and singing is to our services and how we all need to support this ministry.

We know there are people in church who love to sing...we hear you! Why not give chancel choir a try? Please speak to Paulette, a choir member, or a music committee member and find out how rewarding it can be to make a joyful noise unto the Lord.

Your Music Committee — Bev Scobie, Patricia Hilbert, Ellie Lowell



RAISE SOME DOUGH!

Here We Grow Preschool

will earn **20%** of all qualifying sales
from orders placed on **May 23rd**.

When: Tuesday, May 23, 2023

Time: 4:00 P.M. – 9:00 P.M.

Where: 459 Southbridge Street, Auburn

Phone: 508-832-6583

- When you place your order, tell us you support this fundraiser! Hand us this flyer or show it on a mobile device for your organization to get credit for your order.
- Online orders: Enter code **19** at the payment screen and then click apply.
- **Fundraiser orders are only valid with regular priced menu items and cannot be paired with coupons or deals. Fundraisers are not valid on third party orders.**
- Flyers cannot be handed out in or around the Papa Gino's restaurant on the day of your event.
- Flyers made by the organization will not be accepted for the fundraiser event.
- **RESTAURANT ONLY - Ring in this sale using the POS button 19: Fundraiser.**

Valid for all Dine-In, Carry Out, Online & Delivery orders!

View menu and place online orders at: www.papaginos.com

COMMUNITY YARD SALE & PLANT SALE
SATURDAY, JUNE 10th, 8 A.M. till 1 P.M.



Mark your calendars for our **Community Yard Sale on June 10th** and begin setting aside items. 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! Sort those items now and prepare to turn that "trash" into "treasure." Spaces are \$20 for church members, \$25 for non-members. Use of a table is \$5 per table. Please contact Denise in the church office at 508-832-2845 to secure your spot.

SPACES ARE FILLING UP FAST, SO DON'T DELAY!

WE NEED YOUR HELP TO MAKE THIS EVENT A SUCCESS! You can carry out tables and chairs on Friday night (the 9th), help serve and clean refreshment tables, help clean-up and return tables inside at the end of the day on Saturday, make a monetary donation to help defray costs, **SHOW YOUR SUPPORT** by donating perennials, renting a yard sale space, shopping at the yard sale, and joining us for hamburgers and hot dogs. Remember to invite lots of friends and family to join you in all the fun!

Returning again this year, we will be having a church table at the yard sale, so when doing your spring cleaning, keep the church in mind. Your items may be dropped off to the Sunday School room with the elevator **BEGINNING ON JUNE 5TH. PLEASE ENSURE YOUR ITEMS ARE CLEAN AND IN WORKING ORDER.** Books will also be accepted.

Please, **NO** clothes, **NO** VCR tapes, and **NO** TVs/audio/video/computer equipment.

TIDINGS is a monthly publication of
First Congregational Church,
United Church of Christ
128 Central St., Auburn MA 01501
 Phone: (508) 832-2845
 Office Hours: Mon.-Fri. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
 Email: secretary@auburnfirstucc.org
 or PastorBrian@auburnfirstucc.org
God's church in Auburn Center
doing Christ's work in the world.
 Web: auburnfirstucc.org



BULK RATE
 U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
 Non-Profit Org.
 Permit No. 6
 Auburn, Mass

May 2023						
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28	29	30	31			

OR CURRENT RESIDENT