



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

Nov. 29th
1st Sunday in Advent

Dec. 6th
2nd Sunday in Advent
Communion Sunday with
Deacons’ offering/food pantry
Joyful Noyse & Sunday school
children to sing 10 a.m.

Dec. 13th
3rd Sunday in Advent
10 a.m. service



~ All Are Welcome ~

Dec. 20th
4th Sunday in Advent
Christmas Sunday
Service 10 a.m.

Dec. 24th
Christmas Eve
5 p.m. Family Service
11 p.m. Candlelight
Communion Service

Other December activities include **“Parents’ Night Out”** on **December 4th** from 6 to 8 p.m., followed by **YOM’s party**. The **Christmas Potluck and Sing-along** will be held on **December 12th** at 5 p.m. and look for our annual **Cookie Walk** during coffee hour on **December 20th**.

The Christmas Fund 2015

The generous gifts of UCC congregations and individuals to the Christmas Fund enabled the Pension Boards’ Ministerial Assistance program to provide some form of ministerial assistance to impact the lives of hundreds of people during 2014.

- **Christmas “Thank You” gift checks** totaling \$181,200 were sent to 453 retired UCC clergy/lay church employees. This special gift at Christmas time reminds these Veterans of the Cross that they have not been forgotten.
- **Monthly pension supplementation** for 325 lower-income retired UCC clergy/lay employees. Our retired clergy/lay employees relied on this income supplementation for basic needs such as food, utilities, living and/or medical expenses. Pension supplementation totaled \$1,415,732 in 2014.
- **Quarterly health premium supplementation** for 240 lower-income retired UCC clergy/lay employees. These funds subsidized premiums for the UCC Medicare Supplement Health Plan with Rx so that individuals could afford/receive quality health care. Assistance totaled \$495,896 in 2014.
- **Emergency grants** of \$76,430 for 50 active or retired UCC clergy/lay employees. Grants help with unexpected costs (large medical expenses or home damage resulting from natural disasters).

Your gifts are needed more than ever to help the growing number of retirees whose low income annuities make it difficult to meet increased living costs. Enclosed in this month’s *Tidings* is an offering envelope. Please return it to the church (128 Central Street, Auburn, MA 01501) and **thank you** for your generosity.





The pumpkin patch coordinators would like to thank all those who volunteered at the pumpkin patch. This is FCC's biggest fundraiser each year and we were just blown away by your generosity.

You made this happen - each and every one of you.

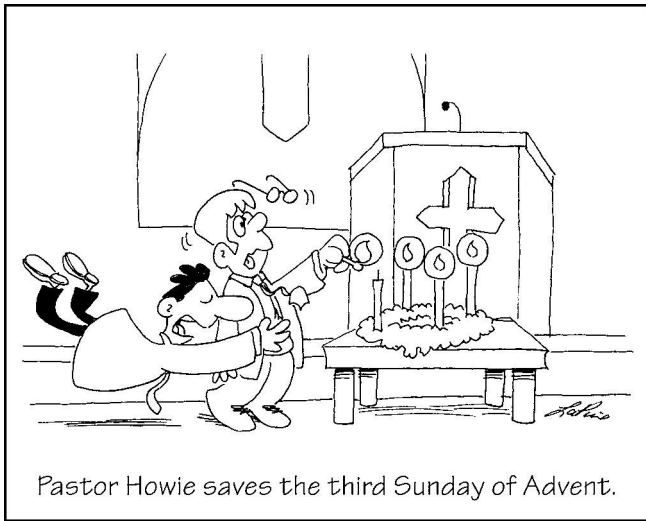
Thank you,

Debbie Mahlert, Linda Mahlert, Sheila Skog, Judi Taft

A huge thank you to Debbie and Linda Mahlert, Sheila Skog and Judi Taft for all their hard work resulting in yet another successful fundraiser this year! And thanks to Bob Murray for all his help with clean-up of the patch.

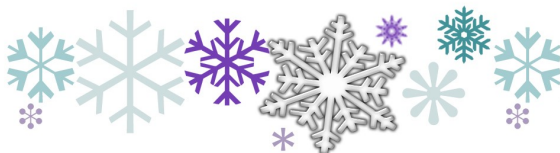
Please plan to join us on **Tues. Dec. 15th, at 5:30** for the movie, *White Christmas*. This will be featured in conjunction with a potluck supper. Remember, all are welcome!

Please contact Pastor Brian with your movie and book suggestions.



Pastor Howie saves the third Sunday of Advent.

During times of inclement weather, we have set up an account with WBZ - TV Channel 4 enabling us to report Church service cancellations. However, if weather is severe enough to result in area power outages, we may not have the capability to contact them. So you should always use your best judgment, exercising caution when deciding whether to venture out to service during stormy weather.



Dear Rev. Grover,

On behalf of our Board of Directors, staff and most especially the children and families we serve, thank you for your generous \$250.00 donation to the "First Day" program.

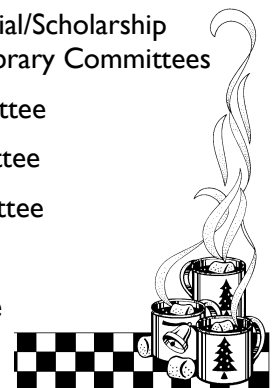
This year, a total of 68 children and adolescents in grades 1-12 returned to school on September 8th with brand new backpacks, school supplies and clothes thanks to the generosity of people like you and the success of the "First Day" program. Nearly half of the 68 youth who participated, were middle school and high school students.

Thank you so much for your support. You have made a difference in the quality of lives for these children.

Sincerely,
Sally D. D'Arcangelo
Executive Director, Auburn Youth and Family Services

Coffee Hour Hosts:

- 11/29 Board of Deacons
- 12/6 Historian, Memorial/Scholarship Nominating & Library Committees
- 12/13 Prudential Committee
- 12/20 Outreach Committee
- 12/27 Personnel Committee
- 1/3, 10 Trustees
- 1/17, 24 Music Committee



FROM PASTOR BRIAN

O, Christmas Traditions, O, Christmas Traditions!

I have not put up a Christmas tree since I moved to Massachusetts. This is part of an old tradition, that I would only put up a Christmas tree if I had a child in the house. I would put up outside lights no matter what, but a tree required a child in the house. A kid should wake up on Christmas to find gifts under a tree. That was my rule.

For a few years my brother would order me a live tree, about 4 feet tall, already decorated. The directions to keep the tree alive after Christmas were to put it in an area with lots of natural light that stayed around 40° F. What kind of place stays like that? What place has lots of sun from December to May? Let alone stays 40°?

Every live tree he sent me died. The tree dying made me sad. Then one year I got a tree from the live tree company that was already dead and brown. So I asked my brother not to send live trees anymore. Then I was given an artificial tree. I am not a fan of artificial trees, so I like the most artificial looking of the artificial trees. For years we put up a white artificial tree. But one year the white tree came out of the box yellow, and in a family with a lot of pets, yellow is not the best color, so that was the last year for the formerly white tree.

As a child living in Errol, in the Great North Woods, Christmas trees were all done one way. Everyone went out into the woods with an axe or saw and cut down their tree for free. Out of all my Christmas trees, the one I most remember is the cat spruce. A cat spruce looks like a normal spruce tree. A cat spruce smells like cat pee. It is a very strong odor, that fills the house and upsets the stomach. You do not catch the bad smell until after the tree warms up for a day or two. I remember my mom and brother quickly getting the glass decorations and lights off the tree. Then quickly getting the tree outside still covered in the rest of the decorations. We turned off the furnace, and opened all the windows and doors to get the smell out of the house. We bundled up and went outside to get the rest of the decorations off the tree. Then the next day we went back out into the woods and got our first pine Christmas tree. From that cat spruce came the tradition of putting up the tree a day or two before we decorate it.

There were no Christmas trees at the first Christmas. Most likely Christmas trees came into Christmas celebrations from pagan Germanic (which includes English) celebrations of the winter solstice. Celebrations that involved trees.

Christianity, especially around Christmas, has always been very open to add things that were important or just fun from other winter festivals. We get poinsettias from Mexico, and Christmas trees from the ancient Germans. In South Dakota it was a popular tradition to eat oyster stew on Christmas Eve. A tradition they told me started with the Pilgrims on Plymouth Rock.

There is plenty of room in Christmas to mix and match traditions. What are your traditions? Do you say they date back to Jesus or Aunt Ida?

Sermon Titles for December:

- 12/6 ~ "Prophecy of Zechariah"
- 12/13 ~ "Underrated Forbearance"
- 12/20 ~ "The Magnificat"
- 12/24 ~ "The Christmas Story" - 5 p.m.
- 12/24 ~ "Not Once upon a Time" - 11 p.m.
- 12/27 ~ "The Boy Increased in Wisdom"

Children's Time:

- 12/6 ~ "St. Nicholas"
- 12/13 ~ "The Story of the Candy Cane"

Keep
in **Christ**
Christmas

Merry Christmas to you all and your families. We are very busy, as usual, downstairs in Sunday School.

December 4th is our annual "Parents Night Out" from 6-8. Hopefully, if you're interested, you've already signed up so we can ensure we have enough food and materials for activities. Every year I chuckle, when after the kids leave, at how exhausted the teens are.

Following the event the YOM kids will have their Yankee Swap. If you are interested, please bring a wrapped gift with a value of \$10.00 to the event.



Cookie Walk

On December 20th YOM will have our Annual Cookie Walk. This is a MAJOR fundraiser for the kids with the profits going toward our winter trip to Berea Christian camp. Your cookie donations (and purchases) are appreciated.

December 24 at 5pm the Sunday School program will recreate the Christmas Story according to Luke. I am pleased to announce our narrators from last year have agreed to participate again this year, with all the Sunday school kids filling in the pantomime parts. Please consider sharing this short program with your family as we celebrate the REAL reason for the season. (We will be discussing and reflecting on Luke this month rather than studying memory verses.)

May you all be safe and celebrate the birth of Jesus with family and friends.

Jean McPherson, Director of Religious Education

The Deacons would like to remind you about the Pearl Morrill Trust fund. This trust was set up by Pearl B. Morrill for the benefit of the elderly members of the First Congregational Church of Auburn. The Trust has been active for almost a year now and has helped several members of the Church with meeting a variety of financial needs. Some things you should know about the Trust:

The Trust is open to elderly members of the Church. We have agreed that "elderly" is defined as age 55 and older.

The administrators of the Trust are the Board of Deacons and the Pastor.

The Pastor may have sole discretion of requests for funds up to \$500. The Pastor and Board of Deacons vote on requests over the \$500 amount.

Requests can be initiated by any Church member (don't need to be 55 or older) but must be for the benefit of elderly members of the Church. Requests can be for any number of needs such as financial hardships, medical bills, projects that benefit the elderly, etc.

The Prudential Committee is responsible for investing funds regarding the Trust. Some of these investments are non-taxable (municipal bonds) and some are taxable.

The Pastor and Board of Deacons are responsible for filing taxes and court documentation. To this end we have secured the services of an accountant to help us in filing taxes.

Administrative fees (Accounting / Court / Legal) and taxes are paid for out of the Pearl Morrill Trust itself with no impact to the Church's general budget.

Final distribution to the Pearl Morrill Trust brought the total trust amount to almost \$625,000.

If you have any questions regarding the operation of the trust itself, please feel free to contact Pastor Brian, one of the Deacons, or one of the Prudential Committee members.

Pastor Brian and the Deacons continue to welcome requests and ideas for usage of this generous trust and would love to see it put to good use.

For the Board of Deacons,
Mike Schillinger

Please note: request forms are available in the church office.

Happy Holidays from Here We Grow Preschool



The children and staff are busy preparing for the fast approaching holiday season. We look forward to the holidays, the excitement they bring, and the time off it allows to our teachers and all the Here We Grow families.

Moving on to the events which took place in November, the children of *Here We Grow* learned about the first Thanksgiving and the act of giving to others. They had the opportunity to bring in food items for the "Giving Basket." Denise and Judy sorted the foods, which were then distributed to families in need throughout Auburn.

We also collected gently used coats for Auburn Youth and Family Services. A very heartfelt thank you to all those involved.

We celebrated our Thanksgiving feasts on Monday, the 23rd, with the 4-year-old children, and on Tuesday, the 24th, with the 3-year-old children in the morning and 3 and 4-year-olds in the afternoon. Both days we had a lot of help from our parent volunteers. Our appetizer was cornbread, made by the 3-year-olds, a friendship fruit salad and dip, vegetables and dip, cheese and crackers, and for dessert we had brownies, made by the 4-year-olds, topped off with cool whip. Thank you to our helpers who cut fruits, veggies, cheese, etc.

With plans well underway for our next winter holiday, during the month of December, *Here We Grow* will participate with the Auburn Police Department in the collection of toys and items for children from infants to 16-year-olds. The police department will distribute everything collected to children living in Auburn.

The HWG children will go from singing Thanksgiving songs to singing songs for our winter holiday programs. Our holiday programs will be on December 17th and 18th, with alternate dates available (depending on the weather). After the holiday parties are finished the teachers will go out for a dinner and exchange of presents. With all the new staff and changes, the girls have worked hard as a team to make this first half of the year a success. The school will be closed from December 23rd -January 1st.

The *Here We Grow* staff and families wish all of you a safe and happy holiday season.

Until 2016, Happy Holidays to all —
Gina Basili, Director, *Here We Grow* Preschool

From the Stewardship Committee

Once again we wish to thank all of you who have returned your pledge cards. If you have not yet returned your pledge card, please do so now. Without them, it makes it difficult for our Trustees to set the budget for the coming year. If you have misplaced your card, please call the church office at 508-832-2845 and we will gladly send you out another. *Remember we need to hear from you even if you do not plan on making a pledge this year.*

The Stewardship Committee wishes you a Merry Christmas and a Joyous New Year. May you
"Count Yourself Blessed."

Marge Averka, Randy Bohn, Cindy Dube,
Linda Hardy, Marilyn Kulesa and Shelia Skog

Advent Candle Lighters

- 11/29 Bev Geddes & the Largesse Family
- 12/6 The Hartmann/Schillinger Family
- 12/13 The Johnson Family
- 12/20 Jane Standing & the Allain/Esposito Family
- 12/24 Carnrike/Temple Family

Happy birthday to:

- Rebecca McPherson ~ Dec. 28th
- Lori-Ann Stockhaus ~ Dec. 28th





Christmas arrangements made of fresh greens will once again be available for you to purchase during coffee hours on **Dec. 13th and 20th**. All the greens are gathered locally, so there is no expense involved. All monies taken in will go to the church's general fund. Keep these in mind when doing your holiday shopping; they make lovely hostess gifts and most are suitable for a table centerpiece.

We enjoy making these and hope you will support this small fundraiser.

Judy Murphy & Cindy Dube



A very belated thank you to all those involved in the church fair over the Columbus Day weekend. The proceeds of just over \$6,000.00 will be used, in part, to pay the balance of the loan for the driveway/parking lot. Some may be used for special projects and some will go to the general fund.

Of course, thanks to my soul *sistahs*, Judy Murphy, Diane Moore and Sheila Skog. Tireless – all of them – and nothing was impossible. Talk about giving your time, talent, and treasures. We are a lucky church to have you, and I am even luckier to be blessed with your friendship.

To all the craft nighters – Bessie and Bev especially. Again, no matter what was asked of them, it was done graciously and with a smile.

Denise? As always, you played such a pivotal role, and gave more than 100%...often with Judy Bjork by your side. Thank you so much to both of you.

Brian, Randy, and Marc – my lack of planning became your emergencies, and you got us out of more jams than I can count. Better planning next year...I promise!!

Of course, to all the people who headed tables... there would be no fair without you. To all those who made or contributed items for the silent auction...it was a huge portion of the fair's success, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart. To all those who worked, baked, cooked, stopped by to help set up or clean up – thank you, thank you, thank you.

Last, but not least – Paul Pellegrino. The poor man walked in one day asking if there was anything he could do. That's the last time he will ever do that. We pounced on him and asked him to hang the "Winter Wonderland" sign. If you saw where it was, that was no small task. I think he was sorry he was in a place of worship with a bunch of church ladies, if you know what I mean. There is a good chance it will hang there for eternity.

Most of all, I thank God for his presence through every moment, and for his bringing us together in fellowship and love.

Next year's fair will be the weekend AFTER Columbus Day. Mark your calendars!

God Bless –
Cindy Ryan



December is Safe Toys and Gifts Month according to the National Health Observances. The 7th-13th is National Influenza Vaccination Week.

A huge thank you to Pastor Brian, Denise, and Judy for cleaning the closet with the medical equipment. If anyone has looked in the closet, you know how easy it is for that space to become disastrous. The equipment doesn't stack neatly, no matter how you try. Items still continue to come and go, which is great. The items are for anyone who needs them.

In December, I am going to move the Widows/Widowers' Group to the first Friday of the month. I heard of some that can't make it on Thursday, so we will try Friday. We will still meet at 9:30-10:30 with coffee and ... available.

Please remember those who are widows and widowers this Christmas. It isn't a joyous time for all. People that are sick, physically and mentally, people who have lost family and others close to them, may struggle especially at this time of the year.

I do wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy New Year.

Debbie Pranaitis, Parish Nurse

On Nov. 8th we celebrated the baptisms of sisters **Mia Lee Gonzalez** and **Isabella Maria Gonzalez**. Mia is 7 and Isabella is 6. Mia and Isabella's grandparents are Linda and Gordon Mahlert.



On November 15th we celebrated the baptisms of **Chase Martin Lange** and **Everett Leo Webb**. Chase is the 8-month-old son of Andrew and Amanda Lange.

His great-grandparents are Bruce Martin and the late Shirley Martin. Everett is the 8-month-old son of Jacob and Lauren Webb. His great-grandparents are the late Harry and Shirley Wojciak.

We're pleased to announce the birth of **Kennady Elizabeth O'Neill**, daughter of Kyla and James O'Neill. Kennady made her appearance on November 5th, weighing in at 9 lbs, 8oz and 22 in. long. Proud grandparents are Jennifer and Randy Bohn and great-grandparents Judy Murphy and Mike and Cindy Dube.

We pray God's continued blessings upon these precious children and their families.

The following is an excerpt from an email received on Nov. 7th from Orphanage Home Nepal.

Hello,

We had "Dashian" festival which we celebrate for 10 days, as I said, I will use the donation for celebrating Dashian but donation came at end of festival and I was unable to use for that moment but good thing is I am using it for our new festival which is called festival of lights "Tihar" which is in 2 days. We celebrate this festival for 4 days. This festival is called "Festival of Lights" because all the homes in Nepal will be decorated by lights and flower-like weeding. It's a very special festival.

I have started using money for buying some good food for the festival in our children's home, will be buying lights for home, a special outing for kids, I will send you all the details on how the money was used after finishing the festival. After this, we will like to use your donation for long lasting project for our children home.



As they've done in years past, the Deacons and Pastor Brian will be delivering Christmas baskets/stockings to shut-ins. We're planning to prepare/assemble baskets on Dec. 12th as part of the Christmas carol sing-along & potluck get together. (Remember, the potluck begins at 5:00 p.m.)

Please look in Fellowship Hall for a list of items that are needed and a donation sign-up sheet, or call the church office if you would like to donate.

ATTENTION ALL COMMITTEES/BOARDS:

All budget requests are due immediately.
Please place in Trustees' mailbox.

ANNUAL REPORT SUBMISSIONS ARE DUE JANUARY 3rd.

Once again the Boy Scouts will be selling Christmas wreaths and cemetery baskets/logs on the Church lawn on Sunday, Nov. 29th and Dec. 6th. Your support is much appreciated.



Delivery is available. Please call George Fournier at 774-239-2240.

December 2015						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

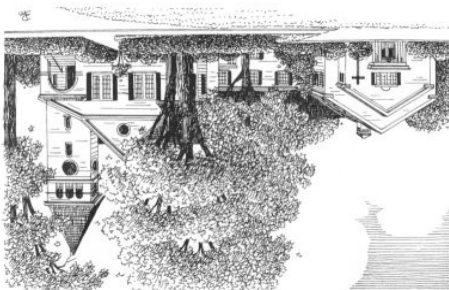
OR CURRENT RESIDENT

TIDINGS is a monthly publication of

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doing Christ's work in the world.*

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