

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



ALL ARE WELCOME

Dec. 3rd

1st Sunday in Advent

Communion Sunday with
Deacons' offering/food pantry
Choir: "Candles & Carols"

Dec. 10th

2nd Sunday in Advent

Dec. 17th

3rd Sunday in Advent



Dec. 24th

4th Sunday in Advent

Christmas Eve

10 a.m. Service

5 p.m. Family Service

11 p.m. Candlelight

Communion Service
featuring Handbell Choir

Other December activities include **"Parents' Night Out"** on Dec. 1st from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m., followed by **YOM's Yankee swap**. The **Christmas Potluck, Sing-along & Christmas Basket Assembly** will be held on Dec. 9th beginning at 5 p.m. and look for our annual **Cookie Walk** during coffee hour on Dec. 17th.

The Christmas Fund 2017

For 116 years the Christmas Fund, for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund, has been a tangible expression of God's love. One of the four Special Mission offerings of the United Church of Christ, the Christmas Fund provides UCC congregations and members an opportunity to reach out in kindheartedness to those who have faithfully shepherded our Church and who now find themselves facing unexpected financial needs.

In 2016, UCC congregations and members generously contributed \$1,562,260 to the offering. This enabled the United Church Board of Ministerial Assistance, the charitable arm of the Pension Boards, to provide, on behalf of the whole Church, Pension Supplementation, Health Premium Supplementation, Emergency Grants, and Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks to individuals and families in need. Here, at FCC in Auburn, we donated \$854 to the 2016 Christmas Fund.

The theme of the 2017 Christmas Fund Offering is "Shepherding the Light." Our goal is to raise \$1.7 million to help support these ministries of light and love. The recipients of these gifts have faithfully served the church and now, in their time of need, we can be the church to them. We invite and encourage you to shepherd God's light and support this year's appeal.

On behalf of the hundreds of clergy and lay employees and their families whose lives were touched by your support of last year's Christmas Fund Offering, we offer our sincere thanks to you for your generosity!

Enclosed in this month's "Tidings" is an offering envelope. Please return it to the church office — 128 Central Street, Auburn, MA 01501, and **thank you** for your support.





Thank you to everyone who helped with the Pumpkin Patch and the Pumpkin Patch Fair. The pumpkin patch raised \$7,719.21 and, as of this printing, the pumpkin patch fair raised \$3,191.95!!! These numbers represent efforts by numerous people. Thank you to EVERYONE who gave of their time and talents to make these fundraisers so successful. We will update the fair total next month, as monies are still being collected.

Please plan to join us on **Tues. Dec. 19th,** at **5:30** for the movie, *Prancer*. Please bring a dish for our potluck supper. Remember, all are welcome!

Coffee Hour Hosts:

- 12/3 Historian, Memorial/Scholarship Nominating & Library Committees
- 12/10 Music Committee
- 12/17 Outreach Committee
- 12/24 Christmas Eve - No Coffee Hour
- 12/31 Board of Trustees
- 1/7 Prudential Committee (2017)
- 1/14 Music Committee (2017 members)
- 1/21 Board of Deacons (2017 members)

During times of inclement weather, we have set up an account with WCVB - TV Channel 5 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.

ATTENTION: We are in need of someone (or a group) to volunteer to run the February supper scheduled for February 17, 2018. If no one volunteers to come forward, we will be forced to cancel the supper. If interested in helping out by preparing the supper, please contact Stan MacPhee. Did you know? Each year the church suppers raise over \$2,600 for the church's general fund!

HANDBELL SCHEDULE

- 12/3 no rehearsal
- 12/10 2:30 p.m. rehearsal
- 12/17 2:30 p.m. rehearsal
- 12/24 10:30 p.m. rehearsal
11:00 p.m. - play at candlelight service
- 12/31 no rehearsal
- 1/7/18 no rehearsal

Rehearsals will resume on January 14th at 2:30 p.m. and continue through the remainder of January.

From the Stewardship Committee

THANK YOU to everyone who participated in Consecration Sunday or returned a pledge card.

If you have not yet done so, please return your pledge card today. The Deacons or the church office can help you if you do not have a pledge card.

Your participation is critical to our success.

As of **November 27**, we have received **91** pledge cards, for a total of **\$119,786**.

Again, our sincere thanks. We appreciate the time, talents, and treasure that you contribute to help First Congregational thrive.

In His Love, your Stewardship Committee
(Lauren Webb, Jake Webb, Linda Hardy, Jeanne Avallone, Marilyn Kulesa, Ellie Lowell)



Happy Birthday to:

- Nathan Minor ~ Dec. 4th
- Rebecca McPherson ~ Dec. 28th
- Lori-Ann Stockhaus ~ Dec. 28th

Ruining the Holidays

I have heard the expression, "Ruining the Holidays." It makes me question when the holidays got so fragile? I think ruining the holidays is an expansion of the concept of ruining a wedding, and is likewise false. Only a bad marriage can ruin a wedding. The wedding is nothing. The marriage is everything.

How can Christmas be ruined?

- 1) "My daughter has to go to her in-laws for Christmas, so I won't see the grandkids on Christmas day." Well, you might have to alternate Christmas day with the in-laws. It is sad for you. But it means your grandkids have a lot of people who love them. They have a lot of people who want to spend time with them. Sarcasm\ It would be so much better if they were lonely, and only you loved them. /sarcasm

All my Christmases growing up consisted of "just" my mom, my brother, and me. I had a hard time imagining a big Christmas. Jenny's family had a Christmas party with over 30 family members. They had a full meal, plus an hour of opening presents. For me, it was overwhelming to have Christmas with that many people. I love Christmas with just a few people, but being with a bunch of people does not ruin my Christmas.

- 2) What else can ruin Christmas? Not getting or giving the right gift?

I only remember 3 Christmas gifts. A bike, a wooden toboggan, and a *Guns of Navarone* play set. *The Guns of Navarone* play set was great. It had a big fortified mountain with big cannons and a WWII landing craft that I never found anywhere else; plus, army men, tanks, and barbed wire. It was great, especially for a kid fascinated with military history.

The toboggan was so much fun. My brother and I used that toboggan so much. We waxed it, so it went faster. How did I not get brain damage from all the things I crashed into? So the years I did not get a memorable gift, were they ruined? No they were good Christmases, but the gifts just didn't stick in my memory.

- 3) What can ruin Christmas? A death?

It will be sad, but also a time to remember and share all the good stories. If the deceased loved one valued family on Christmas, it will be an honor to have Christmas as they liked it. Christmas can be melancholy; we will miss our loved one, but it isn't ruined.

The first Christmas was in a stable because Joseph's family refused to give a bed to a pregnant Mary as she was giving birth. The first Christmas happened under a death sentence from a crazy, murderous, king. The first Christmas had every reason to be a disaster. But the first Christmas was not ruined. The first Christmas had love, family, and God. That is why it is hard to ruin a Christmas. It is a spirit and spirit is hard to ruin.

Pastor Brian




- | | |
|--|---|
| 12/3 ~ The choir will minister in song from "Candles and Carols"
Children's Time: "Singing" | 12/24 ~ 10 a.m. Children's Time: "Mary"
Sermon: "Magnify the Lord" |
| 12/10 ~ Children's Time: "Weird Cousin"
Sermon: "John the Baptizer" | 5 p.m. Children's Time: "The First Noel"
Sermon: "Christmas Eve" |
| 12/17 ~ Children's Time: "Angels"
Sermon: "Angels" | 11 p.m. Sermon: "Pondering" |
| | 12/31 ~ Children's Time: "Jesus Was a Son & Our Brother"
Sermon: "Can You See the Good Thing?" |

As they've done in past years, the Deacons, Pastor Brian, and Deb Pranaitis will be delivering Christmas baskets/stockings to shut-ins. We're planning to pre-prepare/assemble baskets on Dec. 9th as part of the Christmas carol sing-along and 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.





Once again the Boy Scouts will be selling Christmas wreaths and cemetery baskets/logs on the Church lawn on Sunday, Dec. 3rd. Your support is much appreciated.

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

ATTENTION ALL COMMITTEES/BOARDS:

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

ANNUAL REPORT SUBMISSIONS ARE DUE JANUARY 2nd.

AUBURN HUNGER WALK - 10/22/17

Overall, the area churches brought in \$430.07 more than last year! Thank you all for your support to feed the hungry people of Auburn. Sue Campbell

North American Martyrs	\$ 880.00	17 walkers
St. Thomas Episcopal	70.00	1 walker
AYFS	60.00	1 walker
Bethel Lutheran Church	540.00	7 walkers
First Congregational	562.50	4 walkers
St. Joseph's Church	<u>\$1146.20</u>	8 walkers
Total	\$3258.70	38 walkers
Total to Kateri's Kitchen	<u>-\$ 326.00</u>	
Total to AYFS	\$2932.70	

THANK YOU!

New Bibles have been selected to replace the old ones. An order for 192 pew Bibles (New International Version) has been placed. The purchase price is \$12 each.

Please consider purchasing one or more in honor of and/or memory of loved ones.

As we did previously with our new hymnals, dedications will be printed onto labels and affixed to the inside front cover. Please complete an order form and include a check payable to First Congregational Church noting "Memorial Fund — Bible" in the memo section.

BIBLE ORDER FORM

Name _____

Phone # _____

I would like to purchase _____ (quantity) Bibles at a cost of \$12 each.

Label should read: **(PLEASE PRINT)** _____



Happy Holidays from Here We Grow Preschool

Brr! The cold weather has finally arrived. The children and staff are preparing for the winter holiday season which is fast approaching. We are looking forward to the holiday festivities and the excitement they bring. Here We Grow was pleased to once again be able to donate turkeys and other nonperishable items to the church to be delivered to families during the Thanksgiving holiday. It is always nice to watch the children placing their donations in the basket and to listen to the conversations about how the donations are helping those who may need a little extra during this time of year.

With plans well on the way for the winter holiday, the children have gone from Thanksgiving songs to singing songs for our winter holiday programs. During the month of December, Here We Grow will participate with the Auburn Police Department in the collection of toys and items for children ranging from infant to sixteen-years-old. The police department will distribute everything collected to children living in Auburn. The holiday programs will be on December 21st and 22nd. The children are hoping for a visit from the man in red. The 3-year-old children may catch a glimpse of him.

We are also collecting gently used winter coats, snowsuits, and other outerwear throughout the winter to be given to Auburn Youth and Family Services. There is a box outside the Here We Grow office for anyone wishing to help with this cause.

The school will be closed from December 25th -January 1st. Our first day back will be January 2nd.

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

Cristi Corey - Director, Here We Grow Preschool

Our church family will be supporting Columbus Park Elementary school again this year. This year we will be collecting playground toys. The following is a SUGGESTED list of items. Don't be afraid to be creative.

- | | | |
|---------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| -Kick balls | -Wiffle bats and balls | -Sidewalk chalk |
| -Soccer balls | - Footballs | - Jump ropes |

Columbus Park is an elementary school located on Lovell Street in Worcester. The school serves 459 children from Pre-K through 6th grade. 81% of the students qualify for free lunches. The average spent per student statewide is \$19,181; at Columbus Park the average per student is only \$16,610. So, as you can see, there is not a whole lot of room in the budget for playground toys.

When you're out with your kids this holiday season, maybe you could let your kids pick out a playground toy for the kids at Columbus Park. It would be a great teaching moment.

We will have a bin in fellowship hall for all donations.

Thank you and God Bless!

Jennifer Bohn, Chairperson of Deacons



Shirley Hill, Jean McPherson, Zach Lazerick, Pastor Brian,
Cam Scobie, Gabe Lazerick, Shannon Hartmann
Front row: Rebecca McPherson, Reanna Largesse and Pat Bukoski

FROM OUR DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

We want to thank everyone who purchased a pie or cookie dough from YOM; we earned \$240. Enjoy your treat and please say a little prayer for the teens as we prepare for our Monadnock weekend.

Youth On a Mission has been, and will continue to be, busy in the next month. In November we attended Worcester Fellowship with the Outreach Committee (pictured above). We were chilled but very thankful that the rain had stopped and the sun came out. I really enjoy going on this trip with the kids and I am planning to attend again on Easter morning. So, if you would like to join us, mark your calendars.

On December 1st from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. YOM will again have our "Parents' Night Out." This is a time for parents to either get some shopping done, go to dinner, or just relax before the chaos of the holidays gets overwhelming. After the children leave, the teens will have our annual Christmas party and Yankee Swap.

On Sunday, December 17, we will hold our ANNUAL COOKIE WALK! As always, we welcome any and all submissions of cookies/brownies. This is one of our best fundraisers of the year and we appreciate everyone's help.

Then we are off to Monadnock Bible Conference in January for our teen weekend. I want to thank Fred Comeau and Lillian for volunteering to chaperone.

Merry Christmas to everyone, I pray you all have a holiday season full of love and joy.

Jean McPherson, Director of Religious Education



Christmas arrangements made of fresh greens will once again be available for you to purchase during coffee hour on Dec. 10th and, if any remain, on Dec. 17th as well. 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 church fundraiser.

Judy Murphy & Cindy Dube



December is:
 Safe Toys and Gifts Month
 1 World AIDS Day
 3-9 National Handwashing Awareness Week
 4-11 National Influenza Vaccination Week

Handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of germs, so it should be year round, but this is a great reminder! Also, it isn't too late to get a flu shot if you want one.

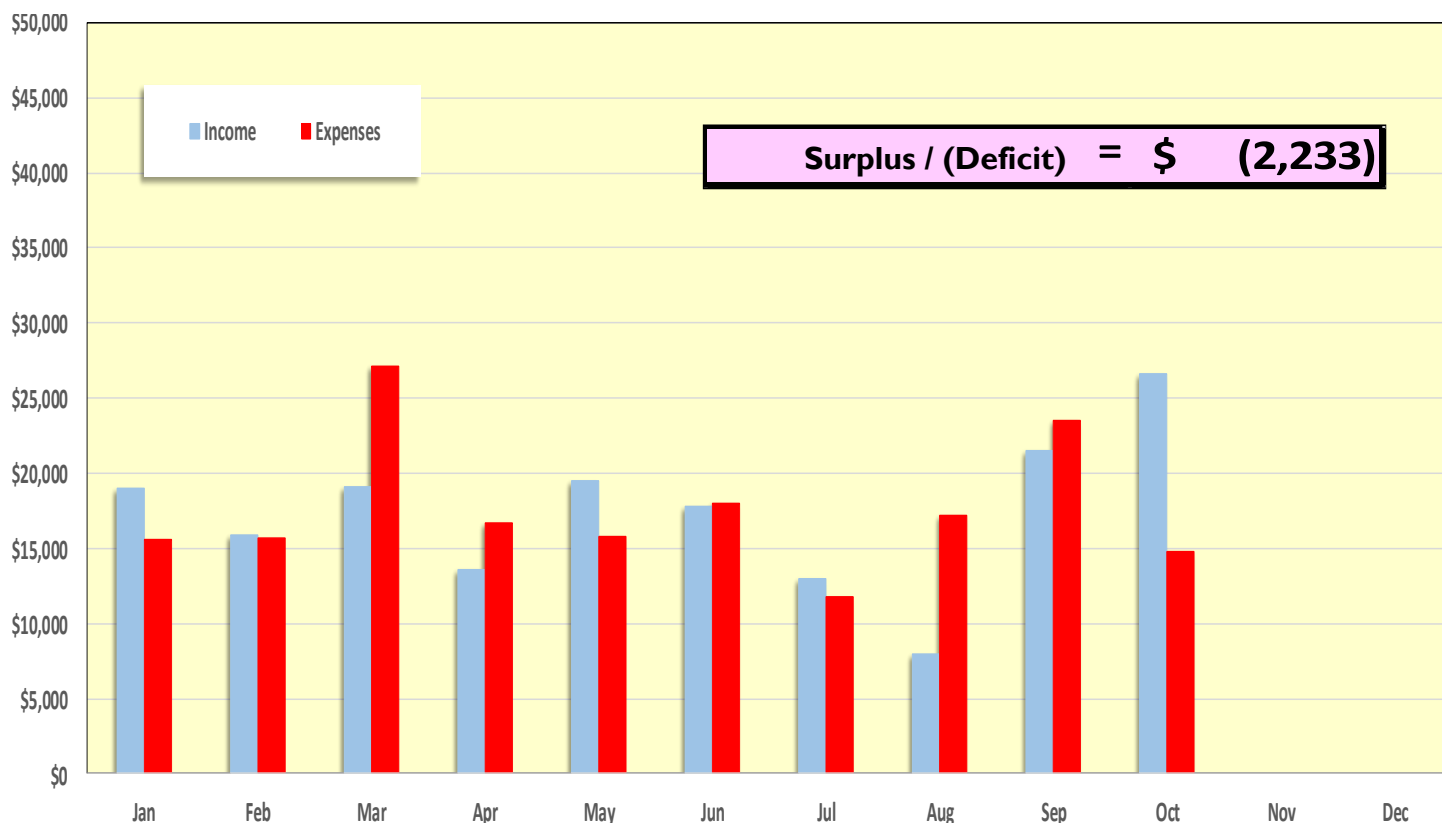
If you know of anyone that needs any medical equipment, please help yourself to the closet. If the item you need, isn't there, please ask me.

I hope everyone has a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! For some, the holidays are going to be difficult, but they are still coming. Talk about your loved one, cry, laugh, and try to enjoy.

God Bless!
 Debbie Pranaitis, Parish Nurse, 508-612-4521

Below our Church Treasurer, Nick Stockhaus, continues to provide us with a “financial snapshot” of the Church’s monthly income and expenses for 2017.

First Congregational Church 2017 Monthly Income & Expenses



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Who can add to Christmas?

The perfect motive is that God so loved the world.

The perfect gift is that He gave His only Son.

The only requirement is to believe in Him.

The reward of faith is that you shall have everlasting life."



-Corrie Ten Boom

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

December 2017						
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