

FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH



DECEMBER

2005

Next Church Supper
Holiday Buffet
at 5:00 PM on
December 17, 2005
\$10/person

**"Too many people
miss the silver lining
because they're
expecting gold."
- Maurice Setter**

**Annual Report articles
due** by the end of December. Early articles are greatly appreciated. Two have already been submitted. All articles submitted via e-mail, please make sure you get an e-mail back saying that your article has been received. Articles may be submitted on 3 1/2" floppy or on CD's.
THANK YOU!!!

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!'"

*Advent—God has Come Into the World
God has come to us—God has come for us*

From years past, we have come to know what to expect, we know the routine, four Sundays of Advent—then Christmas. This series was established to help folk like you and me prepare ourselves to receive the incarnation so that the long expected Jesus would not come unexpectedly. But do we prepare ourselves for this celebration? Or are we so busy preparing for secular Christmas that Christ coming gets pushed off into the backyard stable of our lives.

Jesus surprised the town of Bethlehem, King Herod, the Shepherds, but he didn't surprise the wise men. They studied, they prepared, they journeyed, they asked questions, they asked directions and they, better than any others, understood the earth-shattering event.

Do we care as much as the wise men cared? Do we prepare ourselves as much as they prepared themselves? The Gospel accounts of the incarnation are not just cute stories, they are eye witness accounts of people where lives were changed. May we allow them the power of the incarnation to change our lives as well. On December 26th, will you feel closer to Jesus Christ?

God Bless,
Rev. Dr. Kenneth E Knox
Pastor

A father wanted to read a magazine but was being bothered by his little girl, Shelby. She wanted to know what the United States looked like. Finally, he tore a sheet out of his new magazine on which was printed the map of the country. Tearing it into small pieces, he gave it to Shelby, and said, "Go into the other room and see if you can put this together. This will show you our whole country today."

After a few minutes, Shelby returned and handed him the map correctly fitted and taped together. The father was surprised and asked how she had finished so quickly. "Oh," she said, "on the other side of the paper is a picture of Jesus. When I got all of Jesus back where He belonged, then our country just came together."

- taken from the internet (author unknown)

"Here We Grow!" Preschool

With the month of November gone and the last month of the year 2005 here, the children and staff are busy preparing for the holiday programs.

During the month of November "Here We Grow!" has been talking about families, manners and the gift of giving. On November 21st & 22nd the children came together to share a "feast" day with each other. On the menu this year was cornbread; made by the three year old classes, a friendship fruit salad, cheese and crackers, turkey, and brownies; made by the four year old classes. Again with the help of the Here We Grow parents, all went well.

The children were also very generous with the sharing of foods for 'The Giving Basket'. All foods were given to Rev. Knox to distribute to families in need during the season of Thanksgiving.

On December 3, HWG will be hosting the 10th Gingerbread House Day. This is the school's second fundraiser of the year. Again with the donations of the present and past parents, and the time given by the HWG staff, this should be a fun time for all. If anyone is interested in starting a new tradition with their children and would like to join us, give the school a call.

During the busy month of December "Here We Grow!" will also be participating in the 'Toys for Tots Campaign'. We will be collecting unwrapped toys from December 5-16. The Marines will be stopping by to pick them up on the 16th for distribution to children within the area.

Ending the year of 2005, the HWG children will be entertaining family and friends with holiday programs on December 20th & 21st. We are hoping to have a special visitor on those days, time will tell.

"Here We Grow!" will return to school on January 2nd to start the second half of the school year. The staff and families wish all of you a joyous and safe holiday season.

Until next year, Happy Holidays

Dawn Murphy, Director, HWG



THE ROOF

The new roof over the entire church is complete! The Trustees want to thank everyone for their patience during this huge undertaking. The church should enjoy many years free from roof problems. As we mentioned last month, the Trustees needed to borrow money from invested funds to make the final roof payment. Each month in the Tidings, we will publish the current balance of the Roof Loan. As of October 31st, the balance was \$15,800. Please consider making a pledge towards the Roof Fund so that we may pay back this loan as quickly as possible. Roof pledge cards can be found in Fellowship Hall as well as Building Improvement offering envelopes. Any money donated in these envelopes will go directly towards the Roof Fund.



Christmas Fund Donations

Each year during December we receive Christmas Fund Donations which go to the needs of United Church of Christ clergy and lay workers who are retired or low income. The proceeds from the Christmas Fund are used to provide gifts to clergy and lay employees in all life stages of their ministry to and through the United Church of Christ. The availability of these funds is critical to the ability of the Board of Ministerial Assistance to help ensure a sustainable quality of life for those who ultimately receive the gifts. Dollars given to the Christmas Fund go directly to those who serve or have served the church in their moment of need. Currently over 1,330 families have received either a one-time grant or are receiving continuing assistance through the gifts to the Christmas Fund Special Mission Offering.

Gifts have been provided to:

1. to seminarians who experience a life crisis creating a financial hardship;
2. to active clergy and lay employees whose financial situations have been compromised by tragedy or illness;
3. to retired clergy and lay employees with marginal incomes, supplementing both their incomes and the payment of health benefit premiums.

And because of gifts to the 2004 Christmas Fund appeal, over 30 retirees 100 years or older are among the nearly 1,000 who will receive a Christmas Gift Check in 2005. Your generous contributions do make a difference.



Stewardship...A Way of Life

Let us start off by saying **Thank You!!!!**

Over \$126,000 pledged for 2006 and we haven't even received all our pledge cards yet!! How wonderful that you are returning God's gifts back to him in such a generous way. What's so wonderful about this figure is that it is almost exactly what was pledged last year and by 13 less pledges than we had a year ago. And....better still - we have over 150 pledge cards still out there! Send them in...reap the rewards of giving God your "first fruits"!

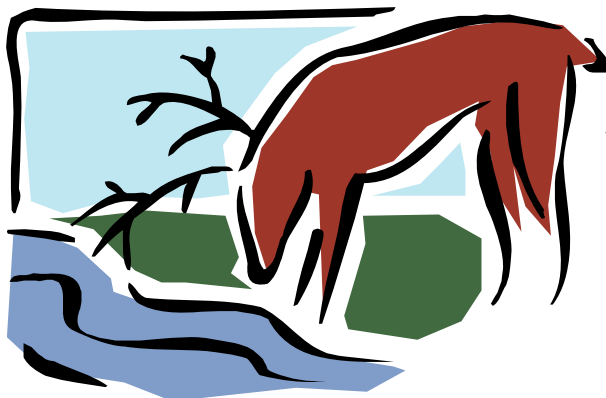
Remember the November *Stewardship*...."ENJOY YOUR GIVING. Giving to God a weekly amount from the top of your income makes giving easier and adds the satisfaction of knowing, as you spend the rest of your income, that you have given God the "first fruits" rather than the "leftovers".

Your Stewardship Committee would like to thank everyone who has participated in this year's Stewardship Campaign. If you have not yet submitted a pledge card for 2006, please do so at your earliest convenience. Completed pledge cards may be placed in the offering plate or mailed to the Church Office. In deciding upon your pledge, please consider the messages that Your Stewardship Committee has shared with you this past year and remember our obligations to Prayer, Time, Talents, and Treasures as well as the six Treasure Principles. Extra pledge cards are available in the Sanctuary and at the Church Office.

Our Committee hopes that each of you finds *Stewardship* a valuable addition to the monthly Tidings mailing. We welcome any comments and/or thoughts you might have regarding this publication or about Stewardship in general. Please feel free to speak with any one of us or send your comments via email to Stewardship@AuburnFirstUCC.org. We look forward to hearing from you.

Happy Holidays to all!!

In His Love,
 The Stewardship Committee
 John Rockwood (Chair), Michael & Michele Schillinger, Al Boucher, Todd & Donna Dube, Kenneth Holstrom



*As the deer pants for streams
 of water, so my soul pants
 for you, O God.*

Psalms 42:1



December is National Drunk & Drugged Driving Prevention Month and Safe Toys and Gifts Month. December 4-10 is National Hand Washing Awareness Week.



So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby.

Luke 2:16

On Saturday, November 19, Joyce Miller R.N. from the Auburn District Nurses came to speak about medication management. It was poorly attended, which was too bad, because she had a lot of important information to share. She left pamphlets and other printed material with me to put on my health table. I have a list of medications that contain Tylenol that most people aren't aware of. I will have copies of these lists so you can take them.

The holidays can be both happy and sad times. It can be sad for those who are suffering from physical and emotional pain, those who have lost a loved one, and those who are alone. It can be a happy time for those who are able to share the times with family and friends that aren't able to get together often. I have a display of Care Notes that I will have on my table, Please help yourself.

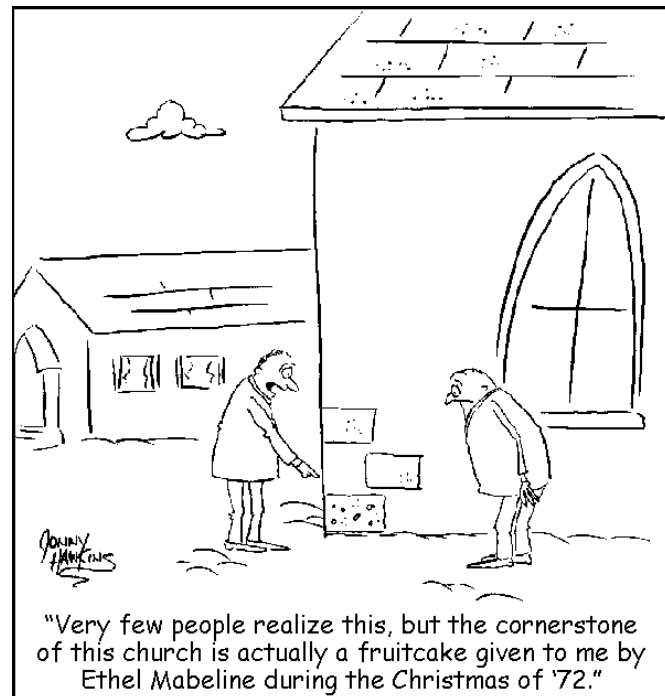
I hope and pray that you all have a safe and happy holiday season.

God Bless!
Debbie Pranaitis

Parish Nurse

Thank you to everyone that got their December articles in on time or early!!!
Tidings articles are due on December 20th.

If you or a loved one will be in the hospital and would like visitation, please let the church know as soon as you can. Thank You!



"Very few people realize this, but the cornerstone of this church is actually a fruitcake given to me by Ethel Mabeline during the Christmas of '72."



Happy Holidays from Youth on a Mission!

We want to thank everyone who ordered something from our Joe Corbi's fundraiser. We raised approximately \$450 and are considering doing it again in the spring for those of you who missed out on the delicious selection of pizza, pretzels, bagels, calzones and cookie doughs.

November 19th was a busy fun filled day for the members of YM. We began by taking delivery of our Joe Corbi's order at 10:00am. We moved on to cutting and splitting the second large tree that was taken down in front of the church and auctioned off the cord wood to the highest bidder. After such a busy day we settled down for a pizza and movie night at the Bohns'.

In December we have regular meetings scheduled for December 4th (during coffee hour) and December 18th (after the cookie walk). **PLEASE** mark your calendars for our annual cookie walk on Sunday December 18th. A variety of festive containers will be available for you to purchase and fill with the cookies of your choice. This a great way to have HOMEMADE cookies around for the holidays or a nice idea for a hostess gift. The 18th will also be the first annual YM Christmas party! If you're already a Youth on a Mission member or have thought about joining, we'd love to have you. Please bring a \$5-\$10 grab gift for our Yankee swap. The party will be held at the Bohns' starting at 1:00 and there will be plenty to eat.

Also, please save the date SUNDAY MARCH 26, 2006 for our third annual YM **LIVE** auction! Anyone that would like to make a donation please see Jen & Randy Bohn or anyone of our YM members.

Our current YM members include Jocie Bohn, Kyla Lemke, Alicia Schillinger, Genya and Nadya Clark, Katie Jernigan, Emily and Kelsey Hanks, Erica Gemme, Justin Murray, Tegan Folsom & Tyler McCracken. YM is open to anyone ninth grade and up. Every individual brings something special and unique to the group and we're always looking to expand.

On a personal note we would ask for your prayers for two of our group facing surgery on December 22nd. Kelsey Hanks will be having knee surgery in Springfield and Randy Bohn will be having his sixth shoulder surgery in Boston. We hope that both will have full and speedy recoveries.

Merry Christmas and God Bless!
Jennifer Bohn

Please keep the church office informed if you will be going down south for the winter. We want to make sure you continue to get your Tidings!!! We had a very small response to the electronic Tidings request. If you would like to help us by receiving your Tidings via e-mail, please let us know.

Thank You



Library Tidings

We're into another season and no more leaves to rake? Maybe on Sunday? Well, just two weeks ago we put a new book on the table in the Adult Library. It's title, Church: Why Bother. It's quite thin and was written by Philip Yancey who always draws readers but it was back the next Sunday with note saying "Excellent Reading" Will you peruse it and tape a two word opinion on the cover when returning it? Of course, the latter is optional.

Our Church Secretary commented that there were a couple of little slips in the Library notice in the last Tidings. I told her the only one I found was in the line "that marriage is the beginning, not the end, of the struggle to make love work" **NOT** "cook"! We chuckled.

As Charlotte covered Room for a Little One - A Christmas Tale by Martin Waddell, she remarked on the awesome illustrations, especially of animals by Jason Cockcroft. It is a lovely book given by Barbara Allaire for pre-school and primary children. It's about when all are welcome in the stable, and there is always room for a little one.

The Dance of Interaction—a Guide to Managing Children's Challenging Behavior was a gift to the library by "Here We Grow!". It has won praise from grandparents, parents, teachers, all who associate with children. The author, Jeanine Fitzgerald, gives a wealth of information with amazing ease—so readable, understandable and valuable. Here are a couple of chapter titles: Being Younique; Meeting Your Type; Having a Fit; Beyond Bossing; Begging and Boiling; Positive Discipline and Don't Pop Your Cork. It's info we ALL can apply and use in Category #3.

Look for Christmas Books in Fellowship Hall and the librarians for big and little people. The selection is incredible.

Last for this month, Christmas Miracles by the Steigers, was named the 2002 Honor Title by Storytelling World magazine as the highest quality storytelling resource. It is a book which is filled with stories of holiday magic. A quick scan found no story longer than 7 pages. The authors wish is for all their readers to keep those Christmas miracles alive in their hearts and spirits all year long.

A blessed and happy Christmas to all from the Library Committee.



Current Fund Raiser

Shop online at <http://www.currentfun.com/> - just follow the prompts to select **The First Congregational Church of Auburn** during checkout. Fifty percent goes directly to the Church. You can continue to order online indefinitely. Any questions, please call 508-832-2845 during business hours. Or contact Linda Graham at 508-832-9507. Orders from the first catalog generated \$368 in funds for the roof.

From the Minister of Christian Music

The month of December brings us a full and diverse selection of musical presentations. On December 4th, the choir presents our annual Christmas Cantata ‘Touched by a Child, Touched by a King.’

On December 11th, we will feature two guest performers. One of the anthems that day will be a vocal duet “An Advent Alleluia” based on Pachelbels canon in D. (Yes, another anthem based on Pachelbel!)

Another special feature will be a violin and piano piece played by guest violinist, Krzysztof Gadawski. To round it all out, the choir will treat everyone to “O Holy Night”.

On December 18th, Joyful Noyse will be featured performing two Christmas anthems for us. “Come light of the World!” has a soft rock feel and is exceptionally well suited to young singers. “Where the Stable Light Shines” is actually written for an adult choir and is put out by Hope Publishing, Co.

After arranging this piece to suit the youth, they showed themselves to be well up to the challenge of performing this anthem.

As you can see, the first three Sundays in December are a wealth of musical offerings; I hope you can partake of them all!

Blessings,

Heather

*‘Serve the Lord with gladness!
Come into His presence with singing!’
Psalm 100:2*



*Christmas
Cantata*

*December 4,
10 AM*

<u>Joyful Noyse Schedule</u>	
11/20	11 AM Rehearsal
11/27	9 AM Rehearsal “Where the Stable Light Shines”
12/4	11 AM Rehearsal
12/11	11 AM Rehearsal
12/18	9 AM Rehearsal “Come, Light of the World!” “Where the Stable Light Shines”
12/24	5:00 PM service Christmas Eve “Come, Light of the World”

**Three Wise Women
Would have...
Asked directions,
Arrived on time,
Helped deliver the baby,
Cleaned the stable.
Made a casserole,
Brought practical gifts and
There would be
Peace on Earth.**

This piece was submitted by Heather Moore



...to Rev. Bachelder and his family on the death of his Dad, Rev. Stephen Bachelder. He passed away on November 10th. The service was this past Monday. Please keep the family and friends in your prayers.



New Address:

Florence LaPlante
The Club at Vero
6885 20th Street - Apt. 161
Vero Beach, FL 32966



Florence was presented with a clock in celebration of her many years of service to the church. She will be staying with Linda and Lori in December and return back to Florida in January.



New Church Member

The friends and family of First Congregational Church would like to welcome Heather Moore as our newest church member. Heather is also a member of our staff as she is our Minister of Music. Please extend Heather your welcome when you see her.

Church member, **Pearl Morrill** (above) turned **100 years old** on November 17. She was the guest of an honorary brunch on November 13 where she was presented with certificates from The President, The Governor, State Representative Frost (who appeared in person) and from the Auburn Board of Selectmen.

Happy Birthday Pearl!!!



Boy Scout Troop 101

Annual Wreath Sale
14 inch double sided
2@15
2@18 w/ bow
(single wreath &8, bows are \$2)

Taking orders, will deliver
Please contact:
Michael Fant at 508-832-4153
or
Tyler McCracken 508-832-4386

Holiday Breakfast

Auburn Senior Center
Saturday, December 3
Cost \$3.00 per person
8 to 11 AM
"Come Visit Santa"

Coffee Hour Hosts

Nov. 27 & Dec. 4	Music
Dec. 11 & 18	Nominating/Scholarship
Dec 25	No Coffee Hour
Jan. 1	Trustees
Jan 8 & 15	Deacons
Jan. 22	Outreach

From the Deacons

December is a wonderfully busy month for the Deacons. We are looking forward to creating a festive Christmas look with fifty poinsettias in the sanctuary. We found a local grower who was able to offer us plants at significantly lower prices than we paid last year. Please complete the enclosed order form and return it to church by December 5. If you have any questions you may call Connie or Ron Hanks at 508-832-4227, or call Tammy at the church office at 832-2845.



The Deacons will be bringing baskets to our church family shut-ins on December 18. Thank you once again to all of you who helped supply us with baskets. As the Deacons visit with some of our older members, we hear some wonderful stories about our church's past. As active members, many of us enjoy visiting with our church family each Sunday, but let us not forget that our family extends far beyond the walls of our building.

The Deacons wish you all Christmas Blessings and Peace, Joy, and Health in the New Year. God Bless.



First Congregational Church will be the hub for the "House Tours" on Dec. 10th, 2005. Women's Fellowship will be providing coffee and...at 9:30 AM with a luncheon served from 11:30—1 PM. There will be a "Super Bake Sale" going on with a Mini Holiday Fair. Tickets for the tours are available for \$12 at: **The Farmer's Daughter & The Auburn Library** or, you can call Barbara at 508-832-3985, Rosalie 508-832-3198, Ann Marie 508-832-3083.

Or mail a check to:

Auburn Women's Club
PO Box 450
Auburn, MA 01501



Tickets at the door will be \$15—so buy tickets now!!!

All are welcome to attend, and only those going on the tour will need to pay the \$12-15.



Season's Greeting from the Church Secretary,

I have just come upon my one year anniversary as the secretary of your church. I was welcomed to your church with open arms a year ago, and feel more like part of the family every day. There was a lot to learn this past year, but with Rev. Knox , the Trustees and the other church members, I was brought up to speed quickly. The feeling of family is very important at any church, and a family you are. I felt truly blessed at Florence's farewell get together when the Stockhaus girls came in and ran to my daughter Kristin for a hug. My daughter had the opportunity to spend some time with them this Summer and you could tell they were happy to see her there. Thank you for accepting my entire family into your family. I pray you all have a blessed year and thank you for making 2005 a truly memorable time in my life.

God Bless
Tammy

TIDINGS is a monthly publication of

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BULK RATE
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December 2006

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