



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:

“Lent is a Gift”

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday which is February 22 this year. On the day before Fat Tuesday (or Mardi Gras if you are French) I will burn the palms from Palm Sunday to make ashes to put on people’s foreheads after our Ash Wednesday service.

Wearing ashes has long been a sign of grief, sorrow and/or repentance. We put on ashes to start Lent to hopefully remind us that we are not worthy of God’s love and sacrifice on Good Friday. It reminds us that we did not earn the resurrection on Easter. Rather, God did all this while we were still sinners. He did this as a free gift. A gift of great value.

We cannot give a better gift than the one God gave us. We are like little children at Christmas. We get many great gifts from our parents and the best we can give is cute cards and little works of art. No store will take a piece of kindergarten art and give a PS 5 in return.

But parents and grandparents can really appreciate the art made with little hands. I hope that is how God sees our Lenten discipline. It is a gesture,

a symbolic action to show we have received a wonderful gift beyond price. Something we could never get on our own.

Our gift will pale in comparison, but we must do something to show appreciation. Something to reciprocate, even if it is only a gesture.

So I hope you find something to do for Lent that will make your life, body, spirit or the world a little better. Or stop doing something you know is wrong.

Also, remember, if it is a fast; i.e., not eating meat on Friday or chocolate ever, Sundays are always a feast day, and we are released from our fast for a day each week.

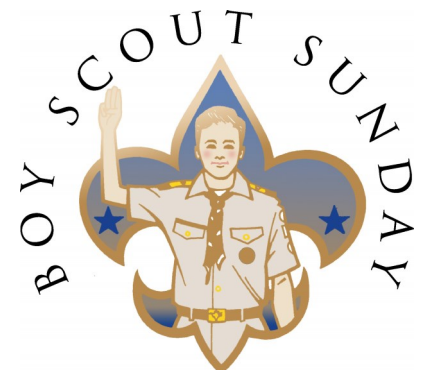
May God bless you and prepare us all to receive the love and life of Jesus Christ, shown in the events of Good Friday and Easter.

God Bless,

Pastor Brian

SERMON TITLES:

- Feb 5 Communion & Boy Scout Sunday
“What Is Salt’s Job?”
- Feb 12 “Let Me Sharpen the Law”
- Feb 19 “Getting Ready for Lent Is Getting Ready for Holy Week
- Feb 22 Ash Wednesday Service at 7 p.m.
- Feb 26 Children’s Sunday
“Jesus Faces a Test”



Join us on Sunday, February 5,
for Boy Scout Sunday.

Message from the Treasurer

Greetings,

As we enter into the new year, I would like to remind everyone that any requests for reimbursements need to have receipts submitted whenever available. Also, I would like to remind everyone to make use of the Payment Authorization Forms that are in the conference room for all expenses that require reimbursement. Please have the appropriate person on the committee authorize any expenditures that are made. If the requestor (one seeking reimbursement) is on that committee already, please have a different member of that committee approve the reimbursement. This also applies to any purchases made on the Church's credit card.

Thank you for your understanding,

Nick Stockhaus, Treasurer

Mark your calendars. Lent begins on February 22nd.

We will hold our **Ash Wednesday service at 7 p.m.**



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 look for an application in fellowship hall or email/call the church office at secretary@auburnfirstucc.org or 508-832-2845 to request an application.

Applications are due by April 15th.

PLEASE NOTE: During times of inclement weather, we will post cancellations on Facebook, send out a church wide email, and will include information in the greeting message on the church's phone, 508-832-2845. However, please keep in mind that if weather is severe enough to result in area power outages, we may not have the capability to utilize these outlets. **So, you should always use your best judgment, exercising caution, when deciding whether to venture out to service during stormy weather.**

SUNDAY SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME

Shannon Hartmann, our Director of Religious Education, has created a sign-up sheet located on the table in fellowship hall for volunteers who would like to help out in Sunday School. This can be a one-time commitment or longer.

If you have any questions, please feel free to speak with Shannon directly or with one of the BOCE (Board of Christian Education) members: Tricia Gervasi, Carrie Grimshaw, Patricia Hilbert, Lillian McPherson, Deb Minor, Katie Sharr and Theresa Stone.



Dear People,

I am extremely grateful for your generosity at Christmas. It is a pleasure to serve as your music director. A huge "Thank you!"

Of course, I could not do my job without the people who commit themselves to the choir every week: Linda Mahlert, Lori Stockhaus, Pam Tentor, Paula Bigelow, and Ron Hanks. Besides ability, they bring a spirit of openness and willingness to make beautiful music together. Thank you, thank you!

It was also a joy to work with Shannon Hartmann and the children for the pageant. The kids put on a wonderful play about Jesus' birth. Mike Schillinger's guitar playing for "Silent Night" added a very special ambience to the evening. Thanks to you all!

The bell choir, led by Herb Mower, also enriches the music program. Thanks to all the members who give their time to this aspect of the church's worship.

The spirit of generosity is alive and well in this church community. As we move into February and Lent, let us continue to praise and give thanks to God for all his blessings.

With deep gratitude,
Paulette

PLEASE NOTE:

There will be a **Worship Planning Meeting on Sunday, February 12, immediately following the service.** At this meeting we will go over the details for our special services in the spring. All members are welcome at the meeting if they have input on our Easter, Holy Week, or Lenten services. In addition to Pastor Brian, Paulette, and Shannon, **representatives from the BOCE, Deacons, and Music Committee are expected to attend.**

2023 COMMITTEE/BOARD NOMINEES STILL NEEDED

At our Annual Meeting on January 22nd, the Nominating Committee presented their report with the nominees to Boards and Committees. **HOWEVER, THE FOLLOWING OPENINGS STILL REMAIN.**

BOARD OF DEACONS: Listed in our bylaws there should be 12 Deacons; however, if two vacancies (one 2 year term and one 3 year term) could be filled, then the Deacons would utilize age appropriate acolytes for the church service only.

MUSIC COMMITTEE: two vacancies, one 2 year term and one 3 year term.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES: one vacancy of 2 years.

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE: one vacancy of 3 years.

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 contact Michele Schillinger, 508-832-9049. Thank you for your help!



February is American Heart Month, Age Related Macular Degeneration/Low Vision Awareness Month, National Children's Dental Health Month, and National Cancer Prevention Month.

February 7-14 is Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Week.

February 12-18 is Heart Failure Awareness Week.

February 3 is National Wear Red Day.

February 3 is Give Kids A Smile Day.

February 4 is World Cancer Day.

February 14 is National Donor Day.

February 22 is National Heart Valve Disease Awareness Day.

Have a blessed and healthy month.

God Bless!

Debbie Pranaitis, Parish Nurse

FCC Church Family –

Thank you so much for thinking of me and for the very generous check from all of you. My best to you all in 2023. Michael (Schillinger)

To My Church Family,

Thank you for the beautiful Christmas basket. Happy New Year to all. – Charlotte (Steffen)

The 2023 altar flower sign-up sheets through Easter are on the clipboard in fellowship hall. If you “reserve” a date each year during this time period, please review the information listed and either indicate your approval by initialing by your name, or make changes directly on the sheet. Please keep in mind that, due to the changing nature of a calendar, we can’t always ensure you will be the sole provider on any given Sunday, in which case your flexibility is greatly appreciated.

If you are signed-up under the “first choice” column (which we may or may not be able to determine who signed up first) please be sure to indicate whether you would like a centerpiece or 3-sided arrangements in the brass vases on the altar. **If you are listed under the “2nd altar” column**, please list your preference (a centerpiece or arrangements in the brass vases) and we’ll do our best to accommodate you.

FROM OUR DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

I like to think of February as the month of love!!! Certainly that notion comes from so many years of celebrating Valentine's Day. I suppose it is fitting that our 6-8th grade class is wrapping up our lesson on, "If God is good, why do bad things happen?" If God loves us so much, why is there so much suffering? Teaching this topic is challenging because, like so many other adults for so many generations, I struggle to fully understand the answer. Is it the scholars that study the Bible for years who understand? Or is it the Christian whose faith is so strong, who confidently yields that the will of God is to be accepted, not understood? I do not know the answer to that. Which is exactly what I told our children.

What I do know is that one of the greatest gifts to us, from God, is free will. Humans are free to make our own choices and those choices have consequences. In Revelation 3:20 the Bible says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me." God wants us to hear the knock at the door and choose Him! Sadly, too often, we do not answer the door.

To learn how our own choices bring us to our own consequences, we read Daniel chapter 3, the story of King Nebuchadnezzar and his gold statue. Read it, the story is a great conversation starter. It was a series of choices made by the king, the astrologers (or "tattle tails" as we referred to them in class) and the 3 Jewish men themselves, that lead them into a burning hot furnace. In order to make relatable, the idea of our own bad choices having a ripple effect beginning with those we love most, we discussed topics such as bullying, drinking and driving, addiction and school shootings. All hot topics that our children this age are faced with or will be facing very soon. I pleaded with them to take a moment and consider how the consequences of their actions WILL effect others. We then referred to the 10 commandments and looked at how all of God's rules are about love and peace. Our choices should be made with love. That is God's will. To live in peace and harmony!

Our littlest children learned about Adam and Eve. God created humans to love and take care of His creation. Our job is to watch over and take care of all the animals and all the land and all water. Do our choices portray that responsibility today? Maybe that is something for all of us to reflect upon!

Thank you for all the love and support from our Sunday School team, our Board of Christian Ed and our entire church community! You guys are the best!!!!

Shannon Hartmann, Director of Religious Education



Please be in prayer for Paul Pellegrino and family due to the recent passing of his wife, Debra.

Debra A. (Hebert) Pellegrino, 70, of Auburn, MA, died peacefully on the morning of Monday, January 9, 2023 at Lifecare Center of Auburn, with her loving family by her side.

She leaves her devoted husband, Paul Pellegrino; her son, Steven Brown; Paul's children, Pennie Turgeon, Cindy Cariglio, PJ Pellegrino, and Peter Pellegrino; numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren; her brothers, Rodney Hebert and Roy Hebert, Sr.; along with many nieces and nephews. Debra was predeceased by her siblings, Joan Tedone, Roger Hebert, Ricky Hebert, and Richard Hebert; and their parents, Samuel and Irene (Joly) Hebert.

Debra was born in Webster, MA, and was raised in North Grosvenordale, CT, as a graduate of Tourtelotte Memorial High School. Recently, she worked for many years at Polar Beverages in Worcester, MA where she was an administrative specialist. In her free time, she enjoyed knitting, and travelling, especially to Cancun, Mexico.

A funeral service was held on January 20 at Bethel Lutheran Church.

Here We Grow Preschool



Here We Grow has started enrollment for next year, and our four-year-old classes are filling up. Our traditional **Open House** this year will be **March 7, 2023** from **9-11 AM** and we are still offering tours in the evenings and on weekends, if you know of a friend, neighbor, or relative who is looking for a preschool.

When thinking about whether to send your child to preschool for the first time, keep in mind what you are hoping to get out of the experience. We start accepting children when they are 2 years, 9 months and, for them, our focus is all about social/emotional growth. This means getting along in a group, taking directions from adults other than Mom and Dad, learning to share, and learning skills to become independent. For children getting ready for kindergarten, we are focusing on more academic skills such as learning about letters and numbers, and printing their names while still providing social skills.

We are also fortunate to be able to offer a class for young 4's. This class is designed for those children who may have already done a year of preschool and need an extra year because they do not make the kindergarten cutoff in their town. For more information about any of our classes, please feel free to stop in the office or call 508-832-8184.

For those of you who have participated in the past, we will be doing our annual calendar raffle giveaway, ticket sales will begin soon. We will leave some in the office with Denise. We thank you for your continued support.

Stay healthy and have a great month!

Cristi Corey, Director, **Here We Grow** Preschool



RECENT BAPTISMS

On January 8, 2023, we celebrated the baptism of Everleigh Ann Wilson, the 10 month-old daughter of Matthew and Kelsey Wilson.

On January 29, we celebrated the baptism of Eloise Renee Kacevich, the 5 ½ month-old daughter of Christopher Kacevich and Jillian Allard. Eloise is the newest member of the Geddes-Largesse Family.



We pray God's continued blessing upon Everleigh and Eloise and their families.



RAISE SOME DOUGH!

Here We Grow Preschool

**will earn 20% of all qualifying sales
from orders placed on February 16th.**

When: Thursday, February 16, 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



Thank you to Boy Scout Troop 53, led by Scoutmaster David Keyes, for constructing the little library (pictured at left) in memory of Michele Fuller.

The library is located by the exterior door most often used when visiting the church office.

Also, thank you to Deb Minor for approaching the Boy Scout Troop about this project.

TIDINGS is a monthly publication of
**First Congregational Church,
 United Church of Christ**
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 doing Christ's work in the world.*
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OR CURRENT RESIDENT