

January  
2011

# 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!’”*

## Our Elusive Unity in Christ

For nearly a hundred years, churches around the world have celebrated a Week of Prayer for Christian Unity during January. This is based on the prayer of Jesus for his disciples in John 17, where he asks: *Holy Father, may they all be one...*

Christ did not go to the cross to establish denominations. The Apostolic Church knew nothing of denominations. As the Church grew and spread to new and different lands, a unified, world wide Church was maintained for a thousand years.

But it did not last. The first major breach occurred in the year 1054. Then, Rome and Constantinople went their separate ways in a basic dispute over doctrine. This split is known as *the Great Schism*. This took place nearly 500 years before the Protestant Reformation ever was heard of. One Roman Catholic priest I know loves to start off a teaching seminar (to a mostly Roman Catholic audience) by saying, *There has not been a Catholic Church since the 11th Century...* Many are startled to learn this.

He is referring, of course, to the Great Schism, and to the original understanding that “catholic” means Universal. In the light of Jesus’ prayer to the Father that his disciples all be one, as He and the Father are One, all Christians fall grievously short.

Once the 16th Century Reformation got under way, the process of splintering took off in earnest. A hundred years later as Europeans from different countries traveled the Atlantic to settle a new world, they brought their many differing Christian practices with them. As a result, denominations as we know them are a uniquely American invention, barely 200 years old in the 2000 year history of the Church.

Today we have hundreds of denominations and sects beyond human count. That does not mean that they are the Will of God. The prophet Isaiah tells us (53:6): *All we like sheep have gone astray. We have all turned to our own way...* While some applaud denominations as the *virtue of human diversity*, they may in fact be *signs of human sin*.

The Congregational tradition carries a spark of divine genius that may guide our future, if we can find the grace to see beyond our own narrow and sectarian tendencies (which everyone has). The opposite of “catholic” is not “protestant.” The opposite of “catholic” is “sectarian” - which means one slice of the pie, instead of the Lord’s whole truth. Congregational wisdom says that every gathered local Church has the obligation to reflect the fullness of the Church Universal, and not to represent some special interest (social, economic, racial, theological, or liturgical) catering to a select clientele.

The Lord lays out several criteria in scripture for his Church on earth. John 17 prays that we should be One. I Timothy 3:16 summarizes a faith that is “believed in throughout the world” (i.e. “catholic” or Universal). Matthew 28:19 enjoins on all Christians an Evangelical witness. Colossians 1:23 declares that we should live blameless lives as a result of the Cross, a hallmark of holiness in the Reformed Church. Romans 8 lays out the power of prayer in the Holy Spirit, a mark of charismatic anointing.

Add these divine imperatives together, and we see the fullness of the Church that God desires: Every local parish should be (1) catholic, (2) apostolic, (3) evangelical, (4) reformed, and (5) charismatic. Or, to spell it out: We should be Catholic in faith, Apostolic in order, Evangelical in witness, Reformed in holiness, Charismatic in anointing.

One or more of these identities are often fighting words that set one community of Christians against another. When that happens, the Lord laments and Satan laughs. Our vision for the future is enriched to the extent that we can rise above such contentious rivalries in response to what the Lord would better have us be.

- Pastor Duke

**Important Notice for all Officers & Committee Members:**

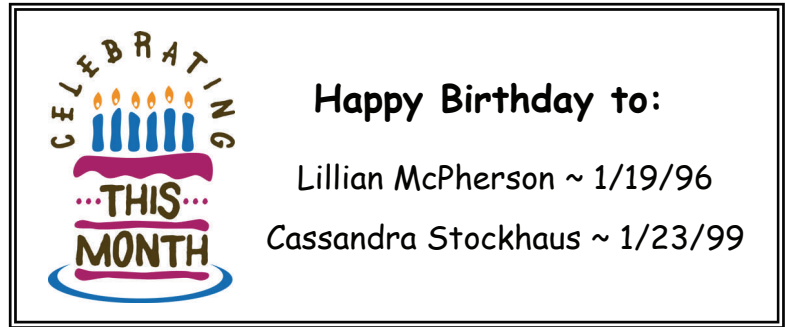
**The Annual Meeting** will be held here on **Saturday, January 15th at 2 p.m.**

**The All Committee Meeting** will be on **Tuesday, January 18th at 7 p.m.** and the **Installation of Officers and Committees** will be during worship on **January 23rd.**

**Coffee Hour Hosts**

1/2 ~ Trustees  
1/9 ~ Deacons  
1/16 ~ Outreach

Please note: a new coffee hour schedule will be handed out at the All Committee Meeting.



Hello Everyone —

From time to time we are asked about how your Boy Scout troop is doing. Well, we are doing great. We do need a few young men to join our ranks.

This pass year under the leadership of George Fournier, Scoutmaster, and Asst. Scoutmasters, Larry Reich, Joe Butler, Paul Poirier, Dave Bragg, John Bryant, Rich Martin, and Dan Toomey we had two scouts make eagle. Four more scouts are up for eagle board of reviews this coming January. Their projects were mostly around Auburn with one in Worcester. One scout, Jared, raised a flagpole and provided landscaping at Auburn Youth & Family Services. Scout Michael refinished our Church by painting and refinishing our floor in the old stage area and back room in the vestry. Scout Matthew scanned and placed on hard disk hundreds of pictures for the Auburn Historical Committee. The fourth Scout, Pat, was in charge of a project for a homeless shelter in Worcester. In regards to service projects, we have been helping with many dinners at the senior center.

This past summer we hit the road with 23 scouts to travel to northern New York to white water the Hudson River as a troop. We all tire tubed a slow moving river. Dave Bragg and I took the scouts on a 6 mile kayak side trip on a feeder river of the Hudson. We also did the course at Adirondack Extreme Adventure Course. This is a course where you travel from tree to tree using ropes, cables, cargo ladders and zip lines starting at 10 feet above ground to 70 feet. A zip line is a cable that you hook a small wheel on and hang in mid air and travel 100 to 1000 feet at a fast speed. The ropes and cables are used for walking from tree to tree. You walk on a single line with a line above you to hold on to. There were five levels of the course. Most of the scouts made all five. Sadly, the three leaders who did the course with the scouts (Dave Bragg, Rich Martin, and I) had to be rescued at the end of level 4.

In other news, we have the back room in the old vestry setup with some scout articles and items. Please check it out. Our Christmas wreath sale is over and we would like to say thank you for your support over the years. I hope that you will support your troop on Scout Sunday, February 13th.

From the Scouts of Troop 101 of the First Congregational, God Bless and Happy New Year.

Yours in Scouting,

Bruce Fant, Committee Chairman, Troop 101

**June in January Sat. January 15th at 5 pm \$8.00**

**Community Supper with Strawberry Shortcake**



Menu includes: Hamburger or Hot Dog and Strawberry Shortcake with homemade biscuit, native berries picked at Tougas Farm in Northboro and fresh cream from Cooper’s Farm in Leicester —a real taste of summer. This is a night not to be missed and will surely chase away those January doldrums.



*Your Merry Christmas may depend on what others do for you. But your Happy New Year depends on what you do for others." ~ Unknown*  
  
*Wishing You and Yours a God-Blessed New Year!*

**JOYFUL NOYSE SCHEDULE**

- 1/2, 1/9, 1/16 ~ 11:15 a.m. rehearsal
- 1/23 ~ 9:15 a.m. rehearsal "Praise God"
- 1/30 ~ 11:15 a.m. rehearsal



**CRADLE ROLL — VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:**

- 1/2 Devon Orcutt & volunteer needed
- 1/16 Linda Hardy
- 1/30 Nan Johnson
- 1/9 Nick Stockhaus
- 1/23 Judy Murphy
- 2/6 Carole Murray



*A message from your Stewardship Committee...*

**Faith in Action** - It is our faith which causes us to examine the purpose for which we manage our money. When our purposes come in line with God’s plan, our stewardship becomes a great blessing to God, others, and ourselves.

As of December 28<sup>th</sup>, we have received approximately 106 pledges for the upcoming year totaling \$118,779. For those of you who have returned your pledge cards, we thank you. If you haven’t returned your pledge card yet, there’s still time!!

Again, thank you all for your commitment of First Congregational Church of Auburn. In your prayers, remember to thank our Lord for all that he provides so that we can continue to be faithful to Him.

In His Love,  
Your Stewardship Committee:  
Michele Schillinger (Chair), Ron Klaucke, Mike Dube, Donna Dube, Linda Hardy



Happy New Year! January is Cervical Health Awareness Month, National Glaucoma Awareness Month, Thyroid Awareness Month, National Birth Defects Prevention Month, and National Radon Action Month.  
January 2-8 is National Folic Acid Awareness Week.

A reminder that I have medical equipment available for anyone to use. If you need something please call the church office, and if it's in the closet please help yourself!

I hope and pray that you all have a Happy, Healthy New Year.

Once again our church joined together to face a challenge - no poinsettias for Christmas. Together people shared ideas which merged into this year's "Blessing Bows". As a result over \$550 has been given to the Outreach Committee to share with those in need. We pray the funds bring greatly needed blessings to the lives of these people. Thank you all for your understanding, ideas, and participation in the Blessing Bow concept.

The poinsettias give the sanctuary a decorative, lovely, holiday feeling for some people. The Blessing Bows were a welcome alternative for others. Neither practice needs to be viewed as better than the other. This year's dilemma simply was a good lesson for all of us that we can share our faith and celebrate Christian holidays in a variety of ways, as long as they are with the love of God and Jesus Christ in our hearts.

Special thanks to the Trustees and Todd Dube who, in just a few days, made the wreath stands from old rusty flag stands in the church attic, a couple of 2" wooden dowels, and two brass coat hooks. Great job!

From, The Outreach Committee, The Deacons, and Ron and Connie Whitehead Hanks

*(Our heartfelt thanks to Ron and Connie Hanks for persevering in their efforts to find a way to honor our loved ones again this Christmas, and to Gloria Whitehead for hanging the festive wreaths in the Sanctuary.)*

*From your Nominating Committee ~*

The Nominating Committee would like to thank everyone who has stepped up to the plate sharing their time and talents for various committees over the next three years. This is not a commitment to be taken lightly and we appreciate your servitude toward the Lord and First Congregational Church.

We still have many openings, so if you are ready to share your time and talents, please see either Pat or Michele to find out more about how you can help serve on a committee or board. We are waiting to talk with you.

In His Love,

Your Nominating Committee:

Michele Schillinger (Chair) and Pat Bukoski



### *Happy New Year from Here We Grow Preschool*

*Here we are with another new year — welcome to 2011. We've made it through the holidays and look forward to settling in for a long winter. Hopefully, you all had a wonderful Christmas.*



*During the month of December, Here We Grow once again ran a successful Toys for Tots campaign; we donated more than 150 gifts this year. As in the past, the children and families were very generous; giving gifts to those less fortunate. This is one small way Here We Grow continues as an educational outreach program of First Congregational Church of Auburn.*

*We also gave a wonderful gift bag filled with gift cards to the Slomski Family to help "dad" out with Christmas shopping. It is nice to know that many families are remembering Jeff and the children during this holiday season. We all miss Karyn.*

*Our holiday programs were held on December 21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> with a visit from Santa (thanks Bob Murray). The children did a great job on stage singing a variety of holiday songs. Once again, the 4-year-olds sang and signed "Happy Birthday to Baby Jesus." After the program on December 22<sup>nd</sup>, the staff enjoyed their holiday luncheon at Jasmine's and swapped gifts with each other.*

*We are busy preparing for the upcoming school year of 2011-2012. Visits will start in January with prospective new students and families. Here We Grow will be hosting an "Open House" on March 9, 2011 from 1:00-2:30. This time is for any new families looking for a preschool for their child or re-visits for ones who have already been here.*

*With the holiday break over and done, I feel we can all settle down for the winter ahead and enjoy the rest of the school year of 2011. Until February, stay warm.*

*Sincerely,*

*Dawn Murphy  
Here We Grow Preschool Director*



On December 26th we celebrated the baptism of Ashlyn Rose Bowers. Ashlyn was just 9 weeks old at the time. She is the daughter of Trevor and Alyx Bowers.

We pray that the Lord will guide and keep Ashlyn and her family.

#### **2011 Offering Envelopes**

Please pick up your 2011 offering envelopes located at the church in the back of the Sanctuary. If you can't find your envelopes, it means you did not make a pledge or didn't indicate that you wanted envelopes. Please see Lori or Nick Stockhaus with any questions.

## Outreach News

Thank you, thank you, thank you and Happy New Year 2011.

The representative of the Goddard School of Science & Technology in Worcester was extremely grateful & appreciative of the receipt of items from FCCA this month. There were 73 items generously donated & we thank you all for your support.

Hope For Housing will continue to be available every Sunday in 2011. Outreach has heard on many occasions how grateful your support has been toward this program of hope. Because of your support, HFH assures us "*an increasing number of family members in Worcester and the surrounding towns have a place to call **home.***" In all of 2010, First Congregational Church collected \$11,275 with 5% (\$563.75) going directly to HFH - thank you.

Our committee saw a busy year and we expect 2011 to be the same. We may be a small committee but blessed with the support of our congregation.

*...and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son.*

*She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger,  
because there was no room for them in the inn. Luke 2:7*



From the Church Secretary

Mere words cannot express the gratitude I feel towards my church family here at First Congregational. In a relatively short time (4 years) you have found your way into my life and heart, and I am truly blessed as a result. I want to thank each one of you for remembering me this Christmas, and really, all year. The appreciation that has been shown me in gifts, a word of encouragement, a timely phone call, is humbling, and I simply feel inadequate in conveying my appreciation. May the Lord bless you, as He has blessed me through you.

Denise

The Spirit Suppers will be held on the third Wednesday of the month at 6 p.m. Remember, this is a casual, potluck supper designed to allow an informal setting for fellowship with our church family. All are welcome.

**The next supper will be held on Wednesday, January 19th at 6 p.m. and will feature a slide presentation of Jen and Randy Bohn's short term missions trip to Haiti.**



In Love, Hope, Peace & Understanding,  
Sue MacPhee, Outreach Committee Secretary

### Tidings 2011

#### Subscription Renewal Form

In an effort to offset the costs of publishing the Monthly *Tidings*, we are asking for members and friends to support a voluntary subscription. Your participation is entirely optional and will not affect whether or not you receive the *Tidings*.

Annual Renewal - (10 issues, no July or Aug. issue)

Please enclose a check or money order for \$10 payable to: **First Congregational Church.**

Please write "**Tidings**" in the memo section

Mail to: First Congregational Church  
128 Central St., Auburn, MA 01501

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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*Thank You!*

## Library Tidings by Gloria Whitehead

Learn the secret of lasting happiness – try *The Be (Happy) Attitudes*. Doesn't that sound like an ideal New Year's resolution?? At least it's a goal to strive for - light, positive ATTITUDES that can transform your life. To start, have we chosen the right situation to make us happy? **NO PROBLEMS?** Hardly! Dr. Robert Schuller says we have too many wrong ideas about happiness. Rather, the positive answer is in the Beatitudes which are a part of the Sermon on the Mount. They pass the test of all time, races, cultures, etc. and are unsurpassed in healing values. One by one, Dr. Schuller breaks down each of the eight Beatitudes showing the basic difference each will make in how to adopt positive mental attitudes that will make happiness possible. This is a good book, so let's see if we can add a spark to this report. The Beatitudes are found in Matthew chapter 6, verses 9 -13, and as you read each one refer to the same number in the list following:

*The Be (Happy) Attitudes*

1. "I Need Help – I Can't Do It Alone."
2. "I'm Really Hurting – But, I'm Going to Bounce Back."
3. "I'm Going to Remain Cool, Calm and Corrected."
4. "I Really Want to Do the Right Thing!"
5. "I'm Going to Treat Others the Way I Want Others to Treat Me."
6. "I've Got to Let the Faith Flow Free Through Me."
7. "I'm Going to Be a Bridge Builder!"
8. "I Can Choose to Be Happy—Anyway!"

Many of you may remember Dr. Schuller as the Senior Minister, and actually, founder of the Crystal Cathedral on TV. As is his style, he makes his talks come alive with real descriptions, humor, power from experience and other situations, whether humbling or dynamic. Maybe you don't need help, but once into *The Be (Happy) Attitudes* your thoughts will have expanded.

Rather than list them again, as you leave church some Sunday, look to the bookcase to the left of the large bookcase at the interior rear of the church. This is a mass of pleasant, good stories – easy reading material. There may be a few elsewhere, but they've all been donated by Gloria Beauregard. When looking for bedtime reading you can find it there, and mention to Susan Klaucke that you've enjoyed her mother's gifts.

So many thoughtful members and friends are starting us on another year. Share your thoughts with someone else when you come upon something from the library that impressed you.

(We received the following thank you notes in response to the Deacons' Christmas baskets.)

George and I wish to thank you  
for the Christmas basket. It was  
nice to be remembered -

Your kindness is greatly appreciated

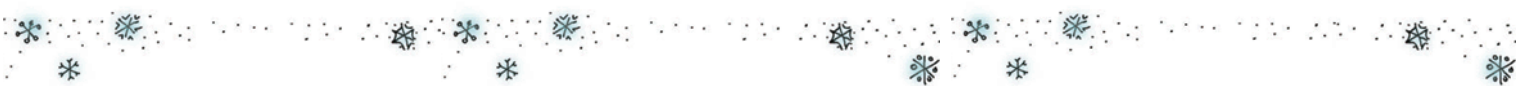
Sincerely  
Grace and George  
DeVerges



Thank you so  
much for the  
fruit basket.

I miss church.

Mrs. Barcroft



Happy New Year! I trust you all had a wonderful Christmas. We have a confirmation teacher!!! Alex Brownwell has agreed to lead our confirmation class, many thanks to you, Alex. We will have a MANDATORY meeting for all confirmands and PARENT(S) after service on January 2<sup>nd</sup> in the green room.



Thank you to all who participated in any way during our cookie walk. It was a great success! The potluck supper and carol sing -along were also well received. We had about 45 people. There was good food, good company, and thanks to Jackie Knox, a lot of good music. We plan to make this an annual event.

Youth On A Mission will be attending Camp Berea February 4 - 6.

We still need a few slots to be filled as assistants in the Sunday school room. There is a list on the door to the Sunday school room or see me for the dates. I will need to have someone cover the class for me in February, since I will be with YOM in New Hampshire. Anyone interested, please see me.

Thank you to all of you who help make this Sunday school program work.

With His guidance we serve,  
Jean McPherson, Dir. of Religious Ed.

TIDINGS is a monthly publication of

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Phone: (508) 832-2845

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Pastor's Office Day: Thursday

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