



JANUARY

2012

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!'"

2012

So here we are in 2012. This is traditionally a time to look back at what we have done and look forward to what is coming. We make plans for the future. We make resolutions to improve ourselves and our lives going forward.

In the last 12 months the church interviewed and hired a new settled minister/pastor (ME!). We had our yard sale, and picked the strawberries for the strawberry shortcake. We hosted monthly dinners, including a new, free-to-the-community dinner. We had Consecration Sunday and Memorial Sunday. We sold out of pumpkins a week before Halloween. The pumpkin patch was astonishing. It is impossible to understand it without experiencing it. I want to thank everyone who worked at these events and also thank the people who came to the events and made them a success.

Looking forward, we will have an afternoon tea from 2-4 p.m. on January 14th. This event will feature four guest speakers from Chile, Paraguay and the U.S. who will share their peace building stories. The annual meeting will be held on the 21st of January. The Trustees and the Stewardship Committee are working on a budget, so if you have a pledge to turn in, please do so quickly. The night of our Annual Meeting is the "June in January" supper, featuring strawberries that I helped pick.

We will thank them in Church on Sunday, January 22nd, but I want to take time now to thank our outgoing officers for their service and thank the incoming officers for agreeing to serve.

Also on the 22nd of January, we will be hosting a neutral pulpit. Search committees have neutral pulpits to help them decide if a minister would be a good candidate. We are supposed to keep the name of the church quiet, if not quite secret, so the Church members at large don't sneak a peek and influence the committee unduly.

Looking at the world in 2012 we can expect people to be freaking out over the Mayan calendar ending. Since the Mayan civilization was at its height in 900AD, then had a devastating dark age that resulted in most Mayan cities being swallowed up by the jungle, why did they even bother with making a calendar up to 2012?

We also get a presidential election year. The political commercials will be so enlightening and uplifting, I am sure.

I want to thank you for your kindness this year, especially your care during my recovery from surgery, and the breakdown of my marriage. You have truly been a blessing to me as your pastor.

I pray you have great memories to treasure from 2011, and I hope and pray God will bless you in 2012.

- Pastor Brian

Happy New Year ♪ Happy New Year ♪ Happy New Year

Important Notice for all Officers & Committee Members:

The Annual Meeting will be held here on **Saturday, January 21st at 2 p.m.** and the **Installation of Officers and Committees** will be during worship on **January 22nd.**

The All Committee Meeting will be on **Monday, January 23rd at 7 p.m.**

Coffee Hour Hosts

1/1, 1/8 ~ Trustees
1/15 ~ Outreach
1/22 ~ Music Committee

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



Happy Birthday to:

Lillian McPherson ~ 1/19/96

Cassandra Stockhaus ~ 1/23/99

2012 Offering Envelopes

Please pick up your 2012 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.

Alice Carlson would like to express her heartfelt appreciation to the Deacons and Church Members for the lovely Christmas Basket.

“It’s beautiful and very much appreciated.”

(Additional thank you cards are located on the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall.)

I want to thank all of you for your kind Christmas cards and gifts. I would like to think I sent a card in return. But, I understand that I am not always very organized. So thank you again for your kind gifts.

May 2012 be a blessed year.

Pastor Brian

SAVE THE DATE

*Massachusetts Conference United Church of Christ,
Central Association Service of Installation for*

Rev. Brian M. Grover

on **Sunday, February 19, 2012 at 4:00 p.m.** to be held at

First Congregational Church, UCC
128 Central Street, Auburn, MA 01501
(508) 832-2845

Brian has been called as Pastor to the First Congregational Church, UCC in Auburn, MA

June in January Sat. January 21st 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.



We hope to see you there!



Happy New Year! I hope everyone had a very nice Christmas. Now, I hope and pray that everyone has a happy, healthy 2012!

January is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month, National Glaucoma Awareness Month, National Birth Defects Prevention Month, National Radon Action Month, and Thyroid Awareness Month. January 8-14 is National Folic Acid Awareness Week. There is a 6 question Folic Acid IQ test on the Health Table in Fellowship Hall, along with some information. Please take these. There is also information about your thyroid, called "Neck Check." Please help yourself to these as well.

I'm starting my Card Ministry up again. I have many cards that I will have addressed and stamped for the committee meetings. If you will please at least sign your name and then seal the card and drop it in the mail, some parishioner will be happy to hear from you. I will also put a few out at coffee hour for anyone to sign. Thank you in advance for your help. God Bless!

We found a couple of parishioners who, unfortunately, had fallen through the cracks as they went from home to hospital and then somewhere other than back home. If you know of a parishioner that goes to the hospital, please inform the church office or Pastor Brian. We don't want to lose anyone. If someone wants to be removed from the mailing list, or the membership list, please let Denise know.

Thank you,
Debbie Pranaitis, Parish Nurse

We continue to hold scheduled potluck suppers (a combination of the “Spirit Suppers” and a book/movie club - “Dinner and Discussion”) in the vestry. The next get together will be on **Tuesday, January 10th at 6 p.m.** We will be discussing the book, *The Year of Living Biblically* by A.J. Jacobs.

Remember, you do NOT have to read the book; if you just want to come for food and fellowship, please do! EVERYONE is invited to join us for any or all parts of the evenings. Come for dinner, come for just the discussion.

A complete list of books, movies and dates is available on the table in both fellowship hall and the adult library in the rear of the sanctuary. Please see Jen Bohn if you have any questions.



Walk, Sister, Walk! **Young Women Peace Builders in Massachusetts**

Four women peace builders from
Chile, Paraguay and the United States share their stories

Walk, Sister, Walk! will be presented here at First Congregational Church, 128 Central St. Auburn

January 14, 2012 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. (Please RSVP to 508-832-2845)

Presented in cooperation with the Chile Partnership Committee of the Massachusetts
Conference of the United Church of Christ.

(This presentation will feature an afternoon tea with light refreshments.)

Walk, sister, walk. In the raging wind, walk. Past the rubble of the earthquake, walk. Among the ruins of the tsunami, walk. Through our ravaged communities, walk. Walk with our grandmothers with wisdom from the past. Walk with our mothers with nurture for the present. Walk with our daughters who dream of new beginnings. Come, sister, walk with me for you do not walk alone.

Elena Huegel, Global Ministries Missionary

Elena is a teacher, a storyteller, a poet, and an artist. As program director of a peace and environmental education camp in central Chile, she uses a variety of imaginative teaching methods to create a context for spiritual transformation and healing.

Carolina Fernández, Community Development Consultant

Through her passion for the history, customs, dreams, rights and social and natural environment of rural communities, Carolina has found a way to build peace in her native country of Paraguay. Her desire is to accompany individuals and communities in their processes of growth, discovery and healing.

Carrie Prestwood-Taylor, Civil and Environmental Engineer

Carrie is a recent engineering school graduate with a love of environment. As an engineer, Carrie hopes to use her education to provide clean water for those in need and her cross-cultural experiences to build a peaceful world for future generations.

Débora Martínez, Chef

Débora is studying international cuisine and oversees the food services at the Shalom Center. She sings in the choir at her local church and plays the violin, the mandolin, the guitar and the tambourine. Débora is helping to build a better world with good food, beautiful music and a spirit of service.

By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. Luke 1:78-79

Happy New Year from *Here We Grow* Preschool

Welcome to 2012. We successfully sang our way through the holidays and look forward to settling in for a long beautiful winter. Hopefully, you and your families had a wonderful Christmas and are looking forward to the New Year and what it has to offer.



During the month of December, *Here We Grow* once again ran a successful Toys for Tots campaign; we collected 120 gifts this year. Thank you to Wayne Prouty for helping to deliver the packages to the Marines. As in the past, the children and families were very generous with their donations of toys, games and books. This is one small way *Here We Grow* continues as an educational outreach program of First Congregational Church of Auburn.

Here We Grow was glad to donate 20 gifts to a family who had stopped in and spoke with Denise about their needs during this Christmas season.

Our holiday programs were held on December 21st & 22nd 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 22nd, 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 2012-2013. Visits will start in January with prospective new students and families. *Here We Grow* will be hosting an "Open House" on March 7, 2012 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 2012. Until February, stay warm and healthy.

Sincerely,
Dawn Murphy, *Here We Grow* Preschool Director

CRADLE ROLL ROTATION:

1/1 Deb Pellegrino	1/8 Linda Hardy
1/15 volunteer needed	1/22 Bessie Morgan
1/29 Jen Bohn	2/5 Judy Murphy



January Sermon Topics

1/1 "New Heaven & a New Earth" - Children's Sermon "Freedom for the Slaves"
1/8 Epiphany Play
1/15 "Answer God's Call" - Children's Sermon "The Priests Cheat"
1/22 Neutral Pulpit
1/29 Cliff Peterson preaches

A Final Article for 2011 from your Nominating Committee....

We had a late surge of volunteers for the upcoming term on FCC of Auburn's various Boards and Committees and for that, WE THANK YOU!

We are still searching for volunteers for the Nominating Committee, which goes into the coming term without anyone on board, and the Board of Deacons. As of this writing, we have 4 Deacons returning to the Board and one newcomer slated for a post through 2014. We also have 2 potential volunteers to the Board of Deacons who are in prayer about being able to make this commitment in their already busy lives. Please pray for wisdom in their being able to make the right decision for them at this time.

Whether we start 2012 with 5 Deacons or 7 Deacons, we will continue to see the need in 2012 for additional "usher" support each week. If being a full-time deacon does not appeal to you, please prayerfully consider volunteering to usher a Sunday or two each month to ease the burden our deacons face.

Thank you again to all the volunteers for terms beginning in 2012!

Respectfully,

Michele Schillinger and Pat Bukoski



Happy New Year!

The past year has been a year of change and hope! Some of the change has been good and has given us hope for a bright future. Some of the change has not been so good, which has challenged us to hold on to our hope and our faith, to see us through the change. I encourage all of you to hold on to the change that the Lord has in store for all of us, and together, through our faith, we can all get through.

We picked the theme, *With Change Comes Hope*, because that's just what we have had to do this past year.

We, as a congregation, have been through much change. We have lost some along the way, the Lord calling them to other places, while some of us have endured the change together. Together we have been able to see this congregation withstand the change the Lord has put upon us. Sticking together we will endure the change that will come in the new year, good or bad.

As of this writing, we are approximately \$20,000 down from last year's budget. Obviously, this is a significant decrease. We encourage anyone who has not pledged to please reconsider, any little bit will certainly help. If you don't plan on pledging, and have not sent your pledge card back, please do so; that way we will know to refrain from sending you reminders.

We thank all of you who have pledged and who continue to support the First Congregational Church.

May the Lord bless you all in the New Year!

The Stewardship Committee

Tidings 2012 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: _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Thank You!

Please call the Church office with any questions,
508-832-2845.

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Happy New Year to you all! I pray you all had a warm and wonderful Christmas.

I would again like to thank my exceptional volunteers on Thanksgiving. We had a wonderful time serving the guests of Jeremiah's Inn. Thank you to Alex and Michelle Brownwell, Bessie Morgan, Joyce Ringgard, Nan Johnson and all that contributed to the feast.

Our "marathon weekend" went well. **Parent's night out** resulted in very happy, but tired, children and teens alike. The teens got a little insight on how tough it is to take care of "active" toddlers. During the **potluck and carol sing** we were entertained with the musical talents of Mrs. Jackie Knox on the piano and Marty Tentor (Pam's husband) on the flute. Pastor Brian informed us a bit on the origins of some of our favorite carols and some of us even learned some Spanish, compliments of Randy Bohn. The food was delicious and many recipes were exchanged.

If you were unable to attend, please try to join us next year. **The cookie walk** was a huge success! Thank you to all who contributed, purchased and enjoyed the cookies.

Coming January 8th is the Epiphany skit put on by the Sunday school and members of the congregation, and written by our own Pastor Brian.

I pray this year will bring you all good health and happiness. If you have any ideas for a program for any age please speak to me or a Board of Ed member. If you would like to join the Board of Ed and help plan these activities please speak with Jen Bohn or Jean McPherson.

Happy New Year!

Jean McPherson, Dir. of Religious Ed.



Library Tidings by Gloria Whitehead

A New Year! Another that we often label as a fresh start although, in reality, every day is that too, right? It stands to reason that some of the things that were high on the list never got done. Yes, the Church Library has a big one. It's the challenge of removing books that no longer have significance there. If you find any, tell a librarian or leave the book itself (with a note if possible) in the bottom drawer of the library stand. Words will not cover our appreciation.

Many thanks again to all of you who gifted books in 2011. If you did not receive a thank you note, please let us know. They will likely be reviewed during this year. However, *By Hook or by Crook* by Jill Briscoe is an older, timeless book. It's defined as how God shaped a fisherman into a shepherd. (For a moment, I reflected on how Pastor Brian spoke of the shepherds in his sermon a couple of Sundays ago.) The fisherman was the apostle, Peter, and how Jesus took this rough hewn man and made him into a shepherd of souls – the same kind of tools which he uses on us. In unsuspecting instances he "causes" events which will change our hearts and draw out the best in us. In turn, we transform it to others. The author concludes, "I hope these pages will help you to see the "Peter possibilities" in all of us.

An Uncommon Gift by James S. Evans is the story of a young man's struggle and amazing victory over dyslexia and hyperkinesia. Imagine being unable to sit still, or to read, one who stutters and whose behavior is, in general, disruptive. Fortunate to have a family who was supportive, he still had to fight the battle alone and as a result had no self love or esteem while having to control his anger. He tells how he feels God would not have given him problems without giving him the resources to cope with them. He describes how Christ was with him throughout his healing process. A truly triumphant and uplifting read!

We are enlisting your help in locating a missing DVD. The case for VeggieTales *Minnesota Cuke and the Search for Samson's Hairbrush* is empty. Please look amongst your media library at home.

As a final note, we'd like to take this opportunity to thank Jenney Grover for the help she gave to the Library. She will be missed.

(We received the following thank you note from the First Church of Monson Congregational.)



November 28, 2011

Dear First Congregational Church,

On behalf of The First Church of Monson, the Town of Monson, and the survivors of the June 1, 2011 tornado, please accept our heartfelt gratitude and thankfulness for your generous contribution of \$5000 to the Monson Tornado Relief Fund. Donations such as yours have allowed us to help the many victims of the tornado.

You are, and continue to be, a light of hope.

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**

January 2012

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