



# 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!’”**

## Guess who’s coming to church?

Our guest organist for Sunday morning worship on July 12 will be Mark Thallander. Mark is a free-lance organist, an organ editor for the Fred Bock Music Company; Adjunct Professor of Organ, Glendale College; President, The Mark Thallander Foundation; a reviewer of new organ music for *Creator* magazine; and a member of the executive committee of the Los Angeles Chapter of the American Guild of Organists. Mark is probably best known for his long and distinguished ministry at The Crystal Cathedral, the largest congregation affiliated with the Reformed Church in America. He joined the staff in January 1976 as a music associate to Don G. Fontana and assisted Arvella Schuller with *Hour of Power* television scripting, service programming and musical guests. Mark was Coordinator of Church Music Exploration, the national church music and worship conference held through the Robert Schuller Institute for Successful Church Leadership.

Following a horrific automobile accident in August of 2003, which resulted in the amputation of one of his arms, Mark has accepted speaking engagements in churches, schools, colleges, universities, and has been interviewed on radio and television programs, and also for newspapers, books and national periodicals. More of his story may be read at [www.markthallander.com](http://www.markthallander.com). A book about Mark's accident and recovery, *Champions*, written by the Reverend Gary DeVaul, has been a great source of inspiration to thousands of people. An expanded version of the book, *Champions... Plus*, was released in October 2007.

Mark will have some of these books as well as some organ and choral music recordings when he is with us in July. We hope you'll be here, along with friends and relatives you invite.

### Community Yard Sale - Space Available

Don't throw that good "stuff" away. Recycle it by selling it to someone who needs it! Do you have an accumulation of things that are just too good to throw away but you no longer need? Don't have enough to hold your own yard sale? Join us on the lawn of the First Congregational Church on June 20<sup>th</sup> for our Community Yard Sale. Space is available for a \$10.00 fee, tables may be rented for \$5.00. Let us do the advertising. We promise to post plenty of signs at key locations in town and will advertise in this newsletter and *The Telegram*.

Other activities including a plant sale, a chicken BBQ, petting zoo (courtesy of Heifer International) and more will also be taking place. Because of our location, and previous yard sales, we expect a large turnout. Reserve your space now by calling Cindy Dube at 508-832-6646 or the church office at 508-832-2845.

### *The Way of Jesus*

Reflections from Rev. Mark Seifried, your Interim Pastor

*To consult moral rules such as those contained in the Ten Commandments  
can provide guidance, not to take their place, but to test them.*

*However, pride can make us cling to our understanding of a moral rule.*

*Thus, while moral rules provide capsules of wisdom tested by time,  
we must resist treating them as idols.*

(From "Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community" by Farnham, Gill, McLean, and Ward)

Recently a few members of the church reported that they got into a discussion with folks from other churches about the nature and manifestation of God's salvation. They could not agree with the interpretation of scripture that says only Christians are worthy of God's salvation. The specific passage that some Christians cite for this belief comes from John's gospel where Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6).

I reckon a literal interpretation of that passage would lead one to believe that only Christians will see God, however, we have to consider the context. Of all the gospels, John's is the most poetic. In fact, John's references for Jesus are all metaphorical. Jesus referred to himself as a shepherd - even though he doesn't have anything to do with sheep. Jesus referred to himself as a vine, living water, the way, truth, etc. He obviously was speaking in metaphor.

So my interpretation of John 14:6 is that the way of Jesus is the way to God. The way of Jesus is love, peace, justice, mercy and forgiveness. If we live that way, we will be with God for eternity, regardless of our religion or the doctrine we subscribe to.

One thing fundamentalists overlook is where Jesus says, "You judge by human standards; judge no one" (John 8:15). He also says to the self-assured, fundamentalist religious authorities, "You know neither me nor my Father" (John 8:19). For me, the bottom line rests on the word "faith." We are a community of faith, not a community of judgment or absolute certainty. It's absurd to profess that anyone knows the mind of God.

We are a people that believes God's revelation is continuous and is not limited to scripture. We are a people with a tradition of questioning authority - even Biblical authority if that authority is used to judge others or limit the wideness of God's mercy in any way. That also is the way of Jesus. We are a church committed to ecumenism and interfaith dialogue because we believe that as we engage other faith expressions, our understanding of God's realm expands. We can do all this and still be a people who follow the way of Jesus.

One of the wonderful things about the Christian Church is its expansiveness. As I wrote in a recent column, the United Church of Christ is a "big tent." We have conservative members and congregations; we have liberal members and congregations; and every mindset in between. The commonality among all UCC congregations is our profession that Jesus is Lord and Savior of the church and her people. Anytime we stray from that belief, we lead toward idolatry. Fundamentalists lean toward bibliolatry and mistake the Bible for Godself.

Let us give thanks for our unique role in Christendom and that we really live our mantra: "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here." This, too, is the way of Jesus.

## Stewardship Message

### *Imagine yourself in the story ... almost a meditation*

*Then he said to them “whose head is on this and whose title?... When they heard this, they left him and went away. (Matthew 22: 20, 22)*

The Pharisees and Herodians are gone. All the people trying to trap Jesus left. In fact, all the stresses in your life have temporarily slunk away. Some of those stresses involve money – a debt, a legacy, a job worry. People were never able to challenge Jesus with money problems. He let them go. So can you.

You are in the story with Jesus and his circle of disciples. He told his challengers they should render God, God-things, and render the contemporary world things that belong to it. You do render God prayer, worship, little deeds of justice or compassion – a letter to your senator, work at the soup kitchen, care for someone who is young or old or lonely, your offering. But the denarius, the twenty dollar bill? You want to ask Jesus how you should render your money. There are so many good things. Groceries – good. Something for a child – prom dress, gymnastics lesson, college education – good. A vacation – good. Rent, a car payment ... a new car – good.

Do you think God doesn't care how you use money that doesn't go to church? Wrong. Jesus sits with a denarius, waiting to show every disciple a different face on it – a *this-world* place that is right for *this* coin. Jesus holds out a coin to you (or maybe a bill). What do you see? The face on the coin is not harmful but hopeful. It may be inexpensive or a big investment. It's best for you, those you love, those around you, and some you don't even know.

Holding the coin, think what spending this money means. What other things will it touch? What other people? The face on the coin will be different another day. Close your imaginary hand and ask God to bless it. When you open your hand, the coin will be gone; but the memory will be there.

*Maren C. Tirabassi is Pastor of Union Congregational UCC of Madbury, NH. Her most recent book is God in My Life: How and Why We Share Faith Stories.*

**May 2009**

God is still speaking,

**UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST**



This resource is a free service and is made possible by your gifts to Our Church's Wider Mission.

## Sanctuary Loan Update

As of April 1st, the outstanding balance on the Sanctuary Loan stands at \$14,510. With the current expectations for Sanctuary pledges for the remainder of the year, there will be a slight shortfall of approximately \$1,200. However, I have faith that our congregation will be able to retire this debt by the end of this year. I will continue to report on the status of the loan every quarter. Thank you to all for keeping your Sanctuary pledges during these difficult economic times.

Nick Stockhaus  
Treasurer



May is American Stroke Month, Clean Air Month, Hepatitis Awareness Month, Lyme Disease Awareness Month, National High Blood Pressure Education Month, Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month, Healthy Vision Month, and Melanoma/Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Month. There is information on the Health Table in Fellowship Hall. Please help yourself to anything that is there.

I just had a skin test done to show damage from the sun and I was amazed! I can't emphasize enough about the need to protect yourself from the sun's rays. Also, 'tis the season for ticks! Check yourselves, children, and pets!

Please remember bike helmets as well! Parents need them as much as children. Head injuries can be permanent! They will change your lifestyle and your family's lives forever!

Please be safe and have a Happy, Healthy Spring!

God Bless!  
Debbie Pranaitis  
Parish Nurse

You are cordially invited to a time of discussion

**When:** Sunday May 31<sup>st</sup> or Sunday June 7<sup>th</sup>

**Where:** Immediately following the service in the sanctuary

**Why:** To update the congregation on where the Pastoral Search Committee is in the search process and the financing of any potential pastor

**Who:** anyone and everyone

Cordially,  
Pastoral Search Committee, Trustees and Stewardship



*Marjorie L. Rannikko*  
*January 25, 1931 - May 28, 2008*

*No longer do we hear her voice, see her face, feel her touch.  
Her wisdom, understanding, support, it meant so much.  
One year has gone by without her in our lives everyday.  
Forever in our hearts will her sweet memories stay.*

*Lovingly missed by her 8 children: Susan, Robert, Lois, William, Jayne, Debra, John, James, sister and brothers and many family members and friends.*



### **Here We Grow Preschool May Tidings**

With the month of May rapidly approaching, we are already preparing for the end of our school year. The 4-year-old classes will be visiting Mary D. Stone School for a tour of the kindergarten classrooms. Our goal is to help them be at ease with the upcoming transition into kindergarten.

During the month of April we were fortunate to have Officer Kennedy from the Auburn Police Department at school to fingerprint all 4-year-old children. The parents will be given the finished product, hoping that they will never have the need to use them. We have been fortunate to have had the Auburn Police, Auburn Fire, and Auburn Children's Librarian visit HWG this year. Thank you to all community groups for their continued support.

With the nice weather upon us, we are spending more time in the outdoor playground. Thank you to Wayne Prouty for cleaning up the playground.

I just received word form NAEYC that we are all set for another year. The annual report was sent in January with any and all changes and improvements which have been made since last year.

This year the 2-day classes will be visiting Noodle Noggin N' Bean for their end-of-year field trip. The 3-day classes will be visiting Davis Farmland. We will be traveling by bus provided by AA Transportation. Both trips are usually full of fun and exploration.

Closing out the school year will be the 3-year-olds' graduation, the 4-year-olds' graduations and Spree Day for all. This is our busiest time of the year, but a very rewarding time of year also. Some families will be leaving HWG for good, some for the summer and some with a year or two off until the younger siblings are of age to come back. Yes, I have already started a wait list for the year 2010-2011. Whatever each family is doing, it is a time for goodbyes. We will miss each and every one of them.

Once again some of the staff will be returning for the last two weeks of June to work the summer program. Themes this year are, "Life's a Beach" and "Life in the Rainforest." If you know of anyone looking for a summer program, send them our way. HWG will close on July 3<sup>rd</sup> for the summer and return late in August.

At this time the entire staff would like to wish Mrs. Mancini a happy retirement. After being at HWG for nine years she is ready to stay home and do crafting. I'll keep you informed as to new staff and any other changes that may come our way.

Until next month, enjoy Spring.

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



## SAVE THE DATE

This year's Golf Tournament will be held at Pine Ridge Country Club, Saturday August 8th at 1PM. Registration/check -in will be at noon that day. We are looking for golfers and sponsors. Flyers will soon be available in Fellowship Hall to sign-up for this event.

Once again Ron and Connie Hanks have blessed us by organizing the Easter flower orders. This is no small task as they coordinate the details with the florist, prepare spreadsheets for the dedications, pick up the plants at the greenhouse in Oxford, label each plant, and deliver and arrange them in the Sanctuary. We just want to take this opportunity to express our warm appreciation for all they do!



**Happy Anniversary to:**  
Carole & Bob Murray who  
will be celebrating their  
special day on May 4<sup>th</sup>.

### Coffee Hour Hosts

5/3	~	Personnel Relations
5/10	~	Prudential
5/17	~	Board of Ed
5/24, 5/31	~	Library
6/7	~	Prudential
6/14	~	Stewardship
6/21, 6/28	~	Historians/Memorial

### **Estate Planning?**

Have you included the church in your will or estate planning? Please prayerfully consider if the Lord would have you remember your church when completing your will.

*"One of the greatest missing teachings in the American church today is the reminder to men and women that nothing we have belongs to us."*

Gordon MacDonald, American Pastor & Teacher

**Congratulations** go out to Junior Girl Scouts, **Tori and Cassie Stockhaus**, who will be presented with the Girl Scout Bronze Award on May 8th. The Bronze Award is the highest award a Junior Girl Scout can achieve, and therefore, a lot of work is necessary to attain it. Well done, girls!



### From the Church Historians . . .

The following is an excerpt from a ledger that was stored in the Town Hall basement. It outlines step-by-step decisions made by our men in building our meetinghouse and forming our town.

George DuHamel & Paula Lubin  
Church Historians

## LEDGER 1773-1786

### Wednesday the 2 Day of Apreil 1777 meet upon ajoinment.

Voted to give 50 dollars to each man that shall enlist for us into the Continental army. Voted to chuse a committee of 4 with the commission officers to ajest the service befor don in the present war 1. Chose it. Comfort Rice, Samuel Eddy, Cap't. John Crowl. Mr. Peter hardy a committee for the S'd purpose.

Voted to ajoin this meeting unto munday the 14 Day of Apreil Instant at one of the clock in the afternoon. Munday the 14 Day of Apreil 1777 meet upon ajoinment. Voted the Parish will pay 50 Dollars to each man who shall enlist into the Continetal Service agreeable to the present Report of their Committee upon a trew ajestment according to their former vote.

This meeting dissolved.

Attest Daniel Boydon, moderator  
A trew Record for minets.  
Samuel Eddy, Parish Clark

Worcester, Sa. To William Parker, Collector. Greetings.

In the name of the government and people of the State of Massachusetts Bay you are herby required in the yousal way & manner to Notify & worn the free holders & other Inhabitance Qualified as the Law Directs to vote in Town affairs in the South Parish in Worcester & Towns ajasent belonging theirto to meet at the meeting house in S'd Parish on Thursday the Ninth Day of October Next at two of the clock in the afternoon persiasly to act on the following articalas.

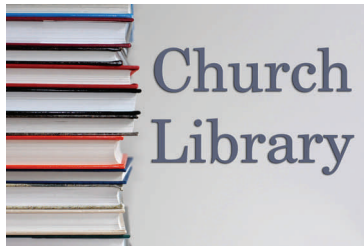
1ly to chus a moderator for S'd meeting.

2ly for the parish to hear the petition Drafted by the Committy. Chosen to prepare a petition Drafted by the committy. Chosen to prepare a petition to the General Cort to Encorporated to a Town & make an addition to the Committee or Do & act any thing relating theit to as they shall think proper.

3ly to know the minds of the parish what they will do about preaching & to do & act any thing relating their to as they shall think proper.

4ly For the parish to hear the Report of the Committee chosen to Defend the case of Jonas Bancroft & to act any thing Relating their to as they shall think proper. Where of fail not & make a Return to one or more of us on or before the time appointed for S's meeting. Given under our hands & seal this 30 Day of September 1777.

5ly for the parish to Review the report of the Commety that was chose at the annual meeting to settle accounts with the Parish treasurer



Library Tidings  
by Gloria Whitehead

Spring is here. It *really* is. So once you've raked the dead grass out of the lawn and your muscles have responded to their workout, find a sunny corner and that good book you just borrowed from the church library and take some time out to recharge.

*Just Shy of Harmony* by Phillip Gullay is a great place to begin. Pastor Sam Gardner has a Quaker church whose congregation is baffled by a sermon titled, "Ten Mutual Funds Jesus Would Die For." You'll meet Deena Morrison, a lawyer and owner of The Legal Grounds Coffee Shop where ten dollars will buy a cup of coffee AND the answer to two legal questions. Paul Harvey, Jr. had written, "Who can resist another invitation to this remarkable author's domain of dear hearts and gentle people."

A true story, *Small Man of Nanatoki* by Lian Nolan dates back to WWII and an amazing Japanese man who placed his life in danger to provide aid and comfort for his enemies. Known as "Uncle John," his official duty was to serve as an interpreter for the Japanese in prison camps and a hospital where the author met him. Instead of watching a TV mystery thriller, read of the risks this man took in the turmoil of wartime; he served as a messenger of peace who turned to God instead of man as his guide.

Five more books have been added to the "*Mystery and the Minister's Wife*" series which Gloria Beauregard has recently given to our church. Thank you, again, Gloria. For now, the books are all on top of the bookcase located by the left hand window at the rear of the sanctuary.

Let this glorious sunshine of spring radiate within and about you. It's free.



## FROM THE DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The flowers are here!! Take a minute to go see the flowers sprouting up in front of the church sign. Last Sunday a few of the kids and I went to check them out and were delighted to see the flowers sprouting up.

The Easter Craft and Egg Hunt afternoon was a success! We had over 40 people show up and enjoy a wonderful afternoon making Story of Jesus banners, color of Faith crosses, butterflies, coloring eggs and hunting for egg treasures. I'm sure it will become an annual event.

### JR. YOUTH GROUP

Saturday May 2<sup>nd</sup> Town Wide Clean-up. Let me know ASAP if you plan to attend.

Sunday May 3 12:00-3:00 "EWE 2" Kid Fest to benefit Heifer International at Pakachoag Church. Face Painting, games, animals, and food.

### CALLING ALL GOLFERS

I have signed the church up for the mini-Golf tournament sponsored by the MAUCC. This is a fundraiser and our Jr. Youth group will receive a share in the profits. As soon as I get more info, I will let you know. The date is June 14. The location is TBA. Sign-up is on the Sunday School board - good practice for the church's annual golf tournament (August 8th).

### LADIES' TEA PARTY Sunday May 17 1:00-3:00 p.m.

*Hats On.* Take all those hats out of those fancy boxes and get ready to show your feathers. Please join us for an afternoon of tea and sweets as we display hats through the ages. Welcome to all ladies, young, and old, and in between. Tickets are \$3.00 and go on sale May 3.

In May the children will be upstairs on the 10th and 24th for the children's message. May 31st will be an intergenerational service and the children will stay throughout the service.

**June 7** is Children's Sunday. All children will participate in the service. At the conclusion of the service *everyone* is invited to bring a picnic lunch and join us outside for an old fashioned picnic. We will have a sign-up in fellowship hall for the potluck dessert table so all are encouraged to bring their favorite baked good to share. Board of Ed will provide drinks.

With His guidance we serve.

Jean McPherson, Director of Religious Ed.

### OUTREACH NEWS

The Outreach Committee is working with W.A.M.S. (Worcester Area Mission Society) and the wider ecumenical community in helping the homeless and near homeless. The project is Hope for Housing. WAMS purchases gift cards from Super Stop & Shop, Big Y, Shaws, & Hannaford's markets. 5% is taken off the price right there at the time of purchase and that money helps the homeless and near homeless. Then WAMS has gift cards that the outreach committee will order weekly and pick up, then sell to you, the parishioners, at face value. We are planning on starting this on May 10, Mother's Day. At coffee hour, we will have sign up sheets for the cards to order for the next week and we will have the cards that you ordered from the previous Sunday. The amounts are \$10, \$25, \$50, & \$100. If you don't use the total amount in one trip to the store, the rest stays on the card until your next trip to the store. You don't lose a cent! You pay \$50 for a \$50 card, yet at the same time, you've helped WAMS with their project.

The homeless, and near homeless, are people that are just barely staying afloat or are staying afloat, then they have a set-back like a job loss, or car troubles, and they don't quite have enough money. They just can't seem to get ahead.

If there are any questions, see someone from Outreach: Bill Storie, Judy Murphy, Sue MacPhee, Sue Campbell, Cindy Dube, or Debbie Pranaitis. Checks are to be made payable to: Hope for Housing. We will be happy to answer any other questions. We had 18 sign up on the first Sunday, so those cards will be ordered for May 10th. Others can still sign up.

Debbie Pranaitis, Outreach Committee

### Church World Service - Blankets+

Blankets+ (formerly called Tools & Blankets) is a special mission opportunity that can involve all ages. Some 8,000 congregations and groups across the United States hold CWS Blankets+ events, providing funds to help people in need around the world, including the U.S.

Your contributions provide the means to transform lives and communities when they are faced with an emergency or simply struggling to put food on the table. For over 60 years, Church World Service has worked in partnership with local communities to identify their needs and access the resources they need to build the foundation for a more viable future, including:

- Blankets, tents, food and other emergency supplies in the wake of a disaster
- Tools and seeds for refugees returning home to replant their fields
- Wells for families living in drought prone areas to provide clean, safe water to drink and to irrigate crops and gardens
- Literacy training and microcredit for women struggling to realize their potential.

Church World Service Blankets+ . . . It's about blankets and so much more!

You will find an offering envelope enclosed in this month's *Tidings*. Please make checks out to First Congregational Church and note "Blankets+" in the memo section. You can place the envelope in the offering plate on Sunday, or mail it to us at First Congregational Church, 128 Central St., Auburn. Also, if you would like to make a donation in honor of your mother, CWS has provided us with special Mother's Day cards for this purpose. Look for a sample card on the table in Fellowship Hall. (There is no charge for the cards.)

*For He delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper.*

Psalm 72:12



**COMMUNITY YARD SALE and PLANT SALE**  
**CHICKEN BBQ and BAND CONCERT**  
**PETTING ZOO (courtesy of Heifer International)**  
**and MUCH MORE!**  
**SATURDAY JUNE 20TH**

There will be lots happening all day long on the front lawn. We will need your help to make it a success. Here are the top 10 ways you can help.

- 1) Pot and label some perennials now as you work in your garden
- 2) Carry out tables and chairs (Friday afternoon or early Saturday morning)
- 3) Help serve and clean tables during BBQ hours
- 4) Help the Outreach Committee with children's activities - they will do all the planning, just looking for a few extra hands
- 5) Sign up for a space in the Yard Sale
- 6) Bake for the Bake Sale
- 7) Help clean up and return tables inside at the end of the day
- 8) Make a monetary donation to help defray our costs
- 9) **SHOW YOUR SUPPORT** - Buy a plant, bring your grandkids for some fun, shop at the yard sale, have lunch or dinner at the Chicken BBQ, invite some friends and family to join you
- 10) Call Cindy Dube at 508-832-6646 to let her know what you will do to help - don't make her beg!




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### Interfaith Hospitality Network Program

The First Congregational Church will host homeless families through the Interfaith Hospitality Network Program once again this year.

**Please note that the week we will be hosting families has changed.** They will arrive on Sunday, July 19th and stay through Sunday, July 26th. Any help you may be able to give during this week will be appreciated.

Everyone has been wonderful with meal preparation and play time with the children.

We will need overnight chaperones who spend the night at the church. This often presents a challenge particularly during the summer. If you could commit to one night as a chaperone, it would assist in providing the necessary coverage.

Thank you for all you have done in past years.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please call me at (508) 798 -8765.

Pat Bukoski



Joyful Noyse Schedule

May Rehearsals 11:15 a.m.  
 6/7 Children's Sunday  
 Joyful Noyse Recognition  
 Beach Party - Surfin' the  
 Scriptures

Our next church supper is planned for  
 Saturday, May 16th at 5:00 p.m.  
 On the menu: Roast Beef Dinner  
 Adults \$10 Children \$5  
 Chef: Bill Storie  
 Servers: Stewardship



**Church Camping Weekend**

**June 19th - 21st  
 at Oak Haven in Wales, MA**

We are looking to gauge the level of interest in our annual church camping weekend. (We only had 3 families last year.) We will be going **Father's Day weekend** which is a week earlier than usual due to the 4th of July falling on a Saturday this year. Please let us know as soon as possible if you plan on joining us as I need to contact the campground soon with the number of sites we will need. Please note that once you make the commitment to go, you will be responsible for the payment even if for some reason you are unable to make it.

Thanks for your cooperation,  
 Lori Stockhaus

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BULK RATE  
 U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
 Non-Profit Org.  
 Permit No. 6  
 Auburn, Mass

May 2009						
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