



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 INTERIM PASTOR:

What’s the Place of Our Assets as We Plan Ministry?

Long, long ago, I spent a summer serving at a large church in Maine. They had a beautiful facility, large sanctuary, great hall, a separate chapel for small weddings and funerals, a huge kitchen, and great parking. There was no asset that a successful church could have that they did not have.

They even had a beautiful parlor. But no one used the parlor. It was kept locked at all times; none of the pastors were allowed to have a key. And all the furniture in the parlor was encased in plastic.

That beautiful asset had no place in the ministry of the church. Yes, it could be used, but using involved applications, and took several weeks to gain approval. Mostly, it was reserved for pre-wedding preparations and occasional Women’s Fellowship meetings. There was an “in-group” which controlled the room. No one else could meet there; it was never used for out-of-church groups.

Every cent invested in that room – for furniture, decorations, paint, carpet, and even cleaning – was a dead loss to the church. In fact, the church didn’t lose just the money they’d spent; the resentment among members about its inaccessibility was an unpleasant part of the church’s life. It set a bad habit for church life.

Churches which wrap their church up in plastic are churches which have already decided that yesterday’s memories are more important than tomorrow’s

visions. They have decided that no wear and tear is acceptable.

It seems to me that the first thing is to be clear about what it’s all about. Why do we have a building, why do we have a beautiful yard? That church in Maine allowed a group to control a room, a group which believed their “why” was to create a beautiful space. Creation and maintenance of the space was all that mattered. It reminded me of the Buildings and Grounds Supervisor at my seminary who was heard to say his job would be a lot easier if we just didn’t have any students.

And “why” matters with more than just the building. When we’re clear about our why, we can be clear about how we use our assets. Is the Pumpkin Patch primarily a fundraiser which also is mission outreach? Or is it mission that happens to make us money? Or – is it an event which, all at the same time, something that draws in friends and neighbors and something that makes money for us and the Native pumpkin growers? If we’re clear that the Pumpkin Patch does all those things, it helps us come up with new ideas which intentionally serve our goals.

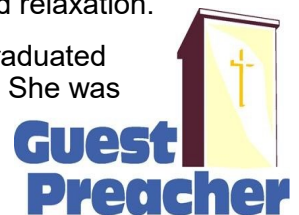
What are our church’s goals? How can we best use our assets – building, property, people, money – to make those goals happen?

Let’s talk!

Pastor Virginia

Pastor Virginia will be on vacation the week of April 1st. Please pray for a time of rest and relaxation.

Join us in welcoming Rev. Noelle Dattilo to the pulpit on Sunday, April 7th. Rev. Dattilo graduated from Andover Newton Theological School in 2012 and was ordained by the UCC in 2015. She was the prison ministry pastor with Worcester Fellowship from 2014 to 2019. As the prison ministry pastor, she visited inmates in the local jails and prisons, and looked for ways to support people coming out of prison. Over the past several years, she has been doing pulpit supply, leading worship in various congregations throughout Central Mass.



To the Members of the First Congregational Church of Auburn, MA:

You are hereby notified and called upon to be present for the Special Meeting of the church on Sunday, 4/7/2024, immediately following the worship service.

You can also join the meeting by Zoom. Those using Zoom should remain connected following the service. A quorum of 40 members is required.

It is both a duty and a privilege of each member of the church to be available to transact the business of the church.

WARRANT ARTICLES

Article I To see if the church will approve the Trustees to spend up to \$20,000 of interest from the Marilyn Plue account to replace windows in the church. A church vote is required for the Trustees to spend more than \$10,000 in a given year.

Article II To see if the church will approve a change to our By-Laws ARTICLE VII Section 2 a), to hold the Annual Meeting on a time and date approved by the Church Council on the warrant, not later than the end of February, instead of the next to the last Sunday in January. The current schedule can create issues for the Treasurer, Auditor, and Church Secretary.

Fuel Fund

As a reminder, there are 4 special offering envelopes for the Fuel Fund throughout the year including the month of April. Any additional donations to help defer fuel costs will be greatly appreciated. Donations to the Fuel Fund can be made at any time throughout the year. Thank you.

Happy Birthday!

Mike Dube's 90th birthday is on April 5th! Did you know it's also Cindy's birthday as well?!

Ernie Smith - April 9th

Haydn McPherson - April 10th

**Happy Anniversary to:**

Ellie & Ed Olson who are celebrating their 51st wedding anniversary on April 1st.

Tricia & Reno Gervasi will celebrate their special day on April 26th.

Coffee Hour Hosts

4/7 ~ **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

4/14 ~ **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

4/21 ~ Financial Secretaries/Treasurers

4/28 ~ Outreach Committee

Would you like to host an upcoming coffee hour? Please sign-up on the clipboard located in fellowship hall.

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 we also have several unrestricted scholarships.

Please contact Denise in the church office at 508-832-2845 or email secretary@auburnfirstucc.org to request an application. **APPLICATIONS ARE DUE BY APRIL 15TH.**

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Spring has Sprung! Or at least that is what "they" tell me! This week, I bundled myself up to plant broccoli seedlings in my garden. These early spring vegetables are hearty enough to not only withstand the chilly air and late frosts, but they thrive in this weather. As the wind blows, the stems and leaves are forced to grow stronger! When the ground around them is freezing, the plant must rely on it's root system to stay alive. As is life, my friends. We must persevere through the cold, the dark and the bitter wind to grow stronger roots, so that we can bear the fruit of the Lord.

The celebration of Christ resurrected should teach us (or remind us of) something new every year. Some years you may understand forgiveness a little better, other years you may focus on the sacrifice. This year, however, I am learning that facing unpleasant things, helps me to grow stronger. Jesus did that! He faced many unpleasant things (to say it lightly) to reach his goal. I can do that too. You can do it as well!!!

Romans 5:3-5

"Not only by this, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope doesn't disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

Our Sunday School classrooms have been bustling with crafts and treats and learning about Lent and Passover and Easter. We had a very successful Palm Sunday celebration including our annual egg hunt. April is a time for us to regroup, review the basics with our children, and hopefully get outside for our lessons. Our goal for April is to learn and understand the parables taught by Jesus.



The Confirmation Class has been working hard preparing for their confirmation ceremony (which will be held on Sunday, June 2nd). Aside from their Tuesday night class, these students are reading, greeting, providing technical support and Sunday school support, making sandwiches and working alongside Worcester Fellowship to nourish those in need with food and with God's love for all people, building relationships with church members, and best of all... they are present. They are here in our beautiful church building as often as they can.

I like to promote conversation between the adults in our community and the children in our community. They learn from us outside of the classroom, with every interaction. If you see a Sunday School or Confirmation student, here are some questions you can ask to prompt a short conversation:

What other names does God have?

Who is Jesus?

Where does the Holy Spirt live?

Why is your church community so important?

Thank you to our BOCE, the parents, our teachers, and our parents and grandparents for your unwavering support! A special shout out to Denise, without whom I would be making a lot of mistakes!!! She keeps me grounded and focused and for that I am forever grateful.

With Love Always,

Shannon Hartmann

A NOTE FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Windows in Fellowship Hall, along with the Education wing, are in poor condition and the Trustees would like to replace them this summer. We are looking for financial help with this project. Here We Grow Pre-school is paying to have all the windows on the first floor replaced. We cannot thank them enough for this generous gift to our Church.

The cost per window is \$800.00 which includes installation. We are asking for donations towards these windows on the second floor, which includes Fellowship Hall. Let's get creative!! You can donate to buy one window or more. You can get together with another family or two and donate a window, or you can make a donation to the church towards the purchase of the windows.

We would like to have donations into the church by the beginning of June so that we can be ready for installation when the preschool is done for the summer and the weather is in our favor.

We will be honoring the donations either with the names of the donors on a plaque or at each window, which we have not yet decided.

Thank you in advance for your support.

The Pearl B. Morrill Trust Fund:

The Pearl B. Morrill Trust Fund was set up by Pearl Morrill for the benefit of the elderly members of the First Congregational Church of Auburn. The Trust has helped several members of the Church with meeting a variety of financial needs. Additional information about the Trust includes:

The Trust is open to elderly members of the Church. We have agreed that "elderly" is defined as age 55 and older.

Requests can be initiated by any Church member (do not need to be 55 or older) but must be for the benefit of elderly members of the Church. Requests can be for any number of needs such as financial hardships, medical bills, projects that benefit the elderly, etc.

The Prudential Committee is responsible for investing Trust funds. Some of these investments are non-taxable (municipal bonds) and some are taxable.

If you have any questions regarding the operation of the trust itself, please feel free to contact one of the Deacons, or one of the Prudential Committee members.

The Deacons continue to welcome requests and ideas for usage of this generous trust and would love to see it put to good use.

Please note: request forms are available by contacting the church office, 508-832-2845, or email secretary@auburnfirstucc.org. Completed forms should be returned to the attention of the Board of Deacons.

ALTAR FLOWER SIGN UP SHEET

The 2024 altar flower sign-up sheet is on the clipboard in fellowship hall. If you "reserve" a date each year, 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. **Since we aren't always able to determine who signed up first, please be sure to indicate your preference: a centerpiece or 3-sided arrangements in the brass vases on the altar and we'll do our best to accommodate you.**

Please note: Berg Florist will bill you directly.



Happy Spring! Warmer weather is coming and that's going to bring the trees alive with their new leaves and colorful flowers!

April is Alcohol Awareness Month, Limb Loss Awareness Month and Sports Eye Safety Month.

April 5-11 is National Public Health Week.

April 24-30 is National Infant Immunization Week.

On the National Health Observance Calendar, it still has April 27 as National Prescription Drug Take Back Day. This doesn't apply anymore, but it's a good reminder that you can take your expired or leftover medication to the lobby in your Police Department and deposit the medication in the bin. If you want, I will take them for you, but this is a good time to clean out any unused medicine.

Have a blessed April.

God Bless,

Deborah Pranaitis, Parish Nurse

PLEASE NOTE:

We now have allergen-free, individually wrapped communion wafers available. They are gluten, dairy, egg, nut, soy and corn free. They will be placed on the communion trays on Communion Sundays, the first Sunday of the month.

PLASTIC BOTTLE CAPS WANTED

Please save your plastic caps from water bottles, milk jugs, soda bottles, etc. (all colors accepted) and place them in the designated collection box in fellowship hall. Please see Shannon Hartmann with any questions.

Thank you for your help.

The next **Women's Fellowship meeting** is planned for **Saturday, April 13th, 9-11 a.m.** Let's come together for fellowship and discussion on ideas of what we wish for this resurrected group. We will be brainstorming about what our mission is, what we would like to get from this group and activities we might want to get involved in. Come with your ideas, we'll supply the coffee and snacks.

Many thanks to Michele Schillinger for organizing the Easter flower orders again this year. Thank you to all who helped with the delivery and, of course, to everyone who provided a plant to adorn the sanctuary.

NEW MEMBER CLASSES STARTING SOON

Pastor Virginia is looking to start new member classes. If you're interested in learning more about church membership, please call the church office, 508-832-2845, or contact Pastor Virginia directly.



From Here We Grow Preschool



We hope everyone had a happy, healthy Easter. The weather is, I think, warming up and we are so happy to be going back outside with the children. We are so fortunate to have access to the vestry all winter long. Not many schools in our area have an indoor playground like we do, but we are ready to go outside. We hope you are all taking advantage of the nice weather we have been having as well.

Warmer weather also means it is time to clean out the closets. We will be having another clothing drive at the end of May, and now that we cannot put textiles in the trash or recycling bins, why not bag them up and bring them in? Exact dates will be coming soon.

Our next Papa Gino's night will be Tuesday, April 23, 4-9 PM at the Auburn location.

Thank you to everyone who purchased tickets for the calendar giveaway. We will begin drawing winners on April 1st - Good luck to all!

Here We Grow will be closed the week of April 15-19 for vacation.

We still have availability in many of our classes for the 2024-25 school year. If you know anyone looking for a great preschool, please send them our way. Children can start school at 2 years, 9 months, do not need to be potty trained, or live in Auburn. We are happy to say we are able to offer tours during the school day as well as evenings and weekends.

Have a safe and healthy month.

Cristi Corey, *Here We Grow* Preschool Director

Dear Church members,

Please consider the following committee vacancies (# still needed to meet Bylaws):

Board of Deacons—4 vacancies

Board of Ed—2 vacancies

Stewardship—2 vacancies

Trustees—1 vacancy

Nominating—2 vacancies

If you have an interest in any of these openings, please reach out to Michele Schillinger of the Nominating Committee, 508-259-2239 or email: chel061759@gmail.com. Thank you.

REQUESTING YOUR HELP

During a conversation with Karen of **WAMS (Worcester Area Mission Society)** Shannon, our Director of Religious Education, asked Karen about a **service project for the confirmation class and learned of a need for diapers and personal hygiene products.**

Karen indicated that the need is great. Sadly, because they do not have access to proper feminine care, girls are missing school, and women are missing work. Karen also mentioned that recently the WAMS warehouse had approximately \$700 worth of diapers, and they were gone in less than an hour. They had to ration the diapers to 25 per family. We think you'll agree that this is unacceptable.

So, the confirmation class is enlisting your help with collecting these items and bringing them with you to church for distribution during April school vacation week. The collection will run **through Sunday, April 14. Thank you so much** to all who have already donated items or plan to do so.

Papa Gino's

PIZZERIA



Here We Grow Preschool

will earn 20% of all qualifying sales
from orders placed on April 23rd.

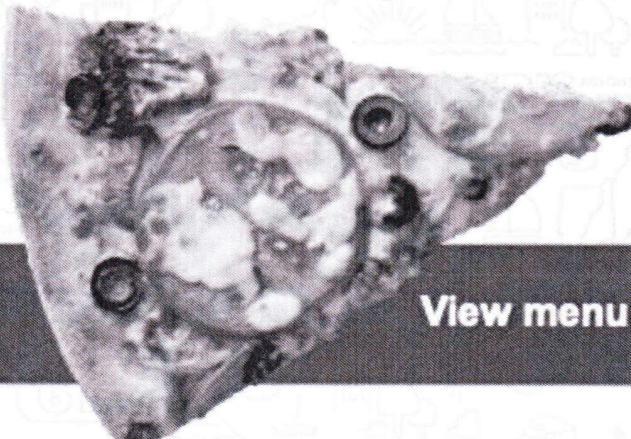


Tuesday, April 23, 2024

4:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Auburn • 459 Southbridge Street • 508-832-6583

- **Walk-in or phone orders:** Mention this fundraiser when you place your order for the organization to get credit for your order.
- **Online orders:** Enter code **19** at the payment screen and then click redeem.
- **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.



Valid for all Dine-In, Carry Out,
Online & Delivery orders!

View menu & place online orders @ papaginos.com

**COMMUNITY YARD SALE—PLANT SALE!!!
SATURDAY, JUNE 8TH ~ 8 A.M. TO 1 P.M. ~ RAIN OR SHINE**



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? Store those items and plan to join us on the Church lawn for **OUR COMMUNITY YARD SALE on June 8th!** As we've done in the past, we will rent spaces and tables, plus we'll do all the advertising and, remember, our prime location can't be beat!

SPACES ARE \$20 FOR CHURCH MEMBERS & \$25 FOR NON-MEMBERS. TABLES ARE AVAILABLE TO RENT FOR \$5 EACH.

**Don't hesitate, RESERVE YOUR SPACE NOW!
Call the church office, 508-832-2845.**

Remember, when separating perennials in your gardens, please keep the **PLANT SALE** in mind and pot up a few to donate. The plants are a huge part of the church's profits! Please be sure to LABEL each pot with the plant name. We're hoping to avoid "mystery" plants. A big seller is RHUBARB! . . . cut and bundle in 6 stalks. Also, please remember to support Christine on Whittemore St. in Leicester as she donates lots and lots of plants to us every year.



***** We wish to recognize and thank Cindy Dube** for all the effort and time she spent volunteering to organize countless past yard sales, spanning over 25+ years! Cindy is now passing the baton to Paula Bigelow. **Welcome aboard, Paula,** and thank you so much for agreeing to oversee this important church fundraiser! ***

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 InterimPastor@auburnfirstucc.org

*God's church in Auburn Center
doing Christ's work in the world.*

Web: auburnfirstucc.org



NON-PROFIT ORG.

U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT #6
AUBURN, MA

April 2024

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				

OR CURRENT RESIDENT