

Herald of Good TIDINGS



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“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 OUR PASTOR:

Storage

When I moved from one house to another there were many things for which I had no room.

What does one do? I rented a storage space.

And filled it. Years passed.

Occasionally, I went there and looked in, but nothing happened, not a single twinge of the heart.

As I grew older, the things I cared about grew fewer, but were more important. So, one day I undid the lock and called the trash man. He took everything.

I felt like the little donkey when his burden was finally lifted. Things!

Burn them, burn them!

Make a beautiful fire!

More room in your heart for love, for the trees! For the birds who own nothing—the reason they can fly.

~ by Mary Oliver

As we watched our sins burn in flames on Ash Wednesday, gathered around an expert fire that roared even as rain poured upon us, we ritualized the spiritual experience of burning all that burdens us so we can find freedom. We all carry plenty of heaviness that we no longer need, burdens from our past that weigh us down now, causing us to make unhealthy decisions over and over as we keep all of the “stuff” that we store. So, in this season of Lent, start cleaning! Like this poem reminds us, the clutter of our physical lives often mirrors the clutter of our internal lives, so the more we order our homes, the more we can order our soul. Take time to inventory the spaces where you dwell, finding what needs to be discarded. Take time to inventory your inner spaces, listing the sins and letting them burn. Remember that fire from Ash Wednesday, and if you weren’t there, then have a look at this image as you imagine all the named sins burning into ashes and no longer holding you captive in the same way. While burning may often be viewed as a way to destroy, in that destruction, there is an ending that is ultimately purifying. You are worthy of Christ’s freedom and are called to be new.

Love,

Pastor Julie





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, 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 the church office at secretary@auburnfirstucc.org or call 508-832-2845 to request an application.

Applications are due by April 15th.

COFFEE HOUR 2025

- March 9 Board of Deacons
- March 16 Trustees & Prudential Committee
- March 23 Mem'l/Scholarship, Nominating, Lib
- March 30 Music Committee & Historian
- April 6 PSC (Pastoral Support Committee)

It is never too early to think about the Plant Sale in June... People are always looking for house plants... can you divide some... start some... buy some? As the weather gets warmer, look around your yard and see what can be divided.

Thank you,
The plant ladies



Ladies, please mark your calendars for the next **WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP MEETING** on **Saturday, April 12th, 9-11 a.m. in fellowship hall.**

*Dear Church Family,
I want to thank you for the thoughtful basket I received while sick at home over Christmas. I appreciate the very thoughtful gift.
Fran Mower*



On Sunday, March 23rd, we will celebrate the baptism of Josiah Jordan Monts, the 7-month-old son of Annabel and Jordan Monts. We look forward to celebrating his baptism together in Christ.



SATURDAY SUPPER DEBRIEF!

Wow, we had a lively event with more people than anticipated for our return of Saturday Suppers! If you would like to be part of organizing Saturday Suppers and support our efforts to build community over a meal, we will be gathering at the Mahlert's home on Sunday, March 16th, at 1:00 p.m. Please stay tuned to the Weekly Email for more details.



OFFICE HOURS



The new office hours are as follows:

Monday-Friday, 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.
Sunday, 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Cindy is available on Sundays before and after worship. Please seek her out either in the office or at coffee hour.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

The church Yard Sale is scheduled for
 Saturday, June 14th.

CHURCH YARD SALE

The 2025 altar flower sign-up sheet through mid-April is 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.

Since we aren't always 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, and we will do our best to accommodate you.

PLEASE NOTE

During times of inclement weather, we will post cancellations on WBZ –TV4, CBSBoston.com, and on the Church's Facebook page. We will also send out a church-wide email and include information in the greeting message on the church secretary's extension when you call the church's phone number , 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 ability 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.**



FROM THE NEW SECRETARY

Dear First Congregational Church,

Thank you for welcoming me as your new Secretary/Office Administrator; I look forward to meeting you all during coffee hour over the next few weeks.

A little about me: I am a musician, born to two very musical parents, and grew up playing games with my sister and the minister's children during Chancel and Bell Choir rehearsals. I started singing in the choir as a young child, and was drafted into the youth bell choir at about age 7 by the director (my dad) when they needed an extra body to play the high "ping" note in "Do You Hear What I Hear." I studied music performance (trombone) at Wellesley, and music education at Teachers College Columbia University, was an exchange student in France where I performed in a couple of cathedrals, and my family and faith are very important in my life. My two children, Anja (14) and Alistair (10), and I moved to the area from NH last August to be able to see more of my mom, Fran Mower. I was the Office Administrator for my church in Peterborough, NH, for a number of years in-between jobs teaching musical theater, elementary classroom music, and high school band. I have learned that my spiritual needs are met in the church office, and am glad to be here in Auburn with you.

Thank you for showing me the ropes here in the church office, and for all of your warm smiles.

~ Cindy Mower

It's not too late to join a committee or board! The Nominating Committee is still trying to fill 9 Board/Committee positions.

Vacancies include:

Board of Deacons (3), Stewardship (2), Board of Trustees (2) Nominating (1), and Music (1).

If you are a church member and have an interest in one (or more) of these openings, please contact Michele Schillinger at 508-259-2239 or email: chel061759@gmail.com. Thank you.



HERE WE GROW PRESCHOOL

We are just over halfway through our school year, and everyone is starting to tire of the cold weather. While we are so grateful to have access to the Vestry every day, the children and teachers are ready to start going outside again. I am hopeful that the groundhog was incorrect last month, and spring will be here soon.

Thank you to everyone who participated in our Super Bowl Pool, and congratulations to the winners.

If you have a friend or family member looking for a preschool for their little one, we would love to meet them. We will be hosting an Open House on Thursday, March 20th, from 9:00-11:00 a.m.; if they are unable to attend, please have them call or email the school to schedule a visit. We offer tours during the school day, which give families a better sense of what HWG has to offer, but I am always willing to come up in the evening or on the weekend if that works better for families. Remember, children can start at 2 years 9 months, and do not have to be potty trained or residents of Auburn to attend. Our Pre-K classes are filling up, but we do have plenty of availability in our 2-day classes for 3-year-olds.

Thank you to all who have been participating in our Papa Gino's fundraisers, we appreciate your support. Our next one is March 20th, from 4:00-9:00 p.m..

Have a fantastic month!

Cristi Corey, Director, Here We Grow Preschool

FROM OUR DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Our Sunday School and Youth On a Mission programs have been running full force this past month. We have been successful with running (3) age-appropriate classrooms every Sunday. This is made possible through the support and commitment of our teachers and volunteers. Not only is an age-appropriate classroom a better environment for learning and teaching, it also allows our students to build relationships with their peers. We are watching friendships grow and blossom in all age groups across Sunday School. Our annual “church camp” at Monadnock is also a key element in building relationships between our teens and preteens. As their peer-bonds grow stronger in an environment that reinforces our faith, our teens find their relationship with God is also growing stronger. Forging friendships in Sunday School is like hiding the broccoli in the mac ‘n cheese!! There is a natural growth in our students as children of God reflecting the life of Jesus. In addition to what is being taught in the classroom setting, our students are presented with “real life” opportunities to make choices that have a foundation of love, kindness, forgiveness, and gratitude.

As we prepare for my favorite season, the season of Lent, we will be discussing the life of Jesus leading up to his resurrection. Our discussions will also include a few of the many parables Jesus used to teach us how to reflect his life in our own lives. Jesus is the Great Teacher! I will forever believe that His way of teaching is the foundation of learning. Jesus lectured (as early as in his teenage years, which we discussed in our younger classrooms), he told stories as examples of how to practically use his instruction, and most importantly, Jesus lead by example.

Thank you to our church family for all of their encouragement and support. My role is a gift from God and is something that I take very seriously.

Thank you to the teachers and volunteers that make this all possible: Michele Schillinger, Stephanie Sanborn, Carrie Grimshaw, Teresa Stone, Stephen Hill, Katie Shar, and our numerous post-confirmation students.

Thank you to the members of our Board of Education who keep the wheels turning and help to keep me focused!

Hebrews 10:24-25

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

~Shannon

Shannon Hartmann, Director of Religious Education

MESSAGE FROM THE TREASURER

Greetings,

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

FROM THE PARISH NURSE



March is Endometriosis Awareness Month and Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month.

March 13 is World Kidney Day

March 20 is the first day of Spring

March 17-23 is Nutrition and Hydration Week

Happy Spring! We can look forward to new flowers blooming, trees budding, and warmer weather.

God Bless!

Debbie Pranaitis

Parish Nurse, cell: 508-612-4521

Happy Birthday to:



- 3/9 - Paula Bigelow
- 3/16 - MacKenzie Young
- 3/26 - Jean McPherson
- 3/28 - Ryan Minor
- 3/29 - Everett Webb

Dear Church Family,

I want to thank you so much for the wonderful "send-off" you blessed me with during the worship service on Sunday, March 9th. It has been my privilege to serve as church secretary for over 18 years. From the beginning, you quickly welcomed me into your lives and hearts, and mere words cannot adequately express the depth of gratitude I have for all of you. I am both overwhelmed and humbled by your outpouring of love and generosity.

I thank God for the many wonderful friendships that have been forged during my time here and look forward to continuing these connections.

With love and heartfelt appreciation,

Denise



EASTER PLANTS

Once again, we will be accepting orders for Easter plants. On Easter Sunday there will be a special insert in the bulletin noting who the plant is in honor of and who it's from. This is a wonderful way to pay tribute to a loved one, while also decorating our church sanctuary. Just complete the order form below and drop it in the Sunday offering plate or mail to the church, 128 Central Street, Auburn, MA 01501. Make checks payable to the church noting Easter flowers in the memo.

PLEASE PRINT.

Lilies (1 stem) \$14.00 _____

Lilies (2 stems) \$26.00 _____

Lilies (3 stems) \$38.00 _____

Tulips 6" \$14.00 _____

Colors: yellow _____ pink _____

purple _____ white _____ red _____

Tulips 8" \$21.00 _____

Colors: yellow _____ pink _____

purple _____ red _____

6" Pansies (mixed colors) \$8.00 _____

6.5" Martha Washington Geraniums \$14.00 _____

Colors: white _____ pink _____ lavender _____ purple _____

Given By: Name(s): _____

Include above name(s) in dedication? Yes _____ No _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

In Memory or Celebration of (PLEASE PRINT) _____

PLEASE NOTE
All plant orders due by April 6th.
 Every effort will be made to provide your 1st choice of colors but, depending on supply, substitutions may be necessary. **Please indicate 1st, 2nd & 3rd color choices.**

PLEASE CHECK
 HERE _____ IF
 YOU WILL **NOT** BE
 TAKING YOUR
 PLANT HOME.

Questions? Please call Michele Schillinger at 508-259-2239.

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REMEMBERING BARBARA SOPONSKI

Barbara M. (White) Soponski, 97, longtime Auburn resident, passed away peacefully with her loving family by her side on Tuesday, February 18, 2025 at Christopher House of Worcester.

She leaves her sons, Dennis R. Soponski and his wife Marlene, of Spencer, and Brian F. Soponski and his wife Laurie, of Auburn; her grandchildren, Amanda Senorans and her husband Frankie, of Palm Bay, FL, and Benjamin Soponski, of Auburn; her great-grandchildren, Christopher, Anthony, and Olivia; her sister, Judith White Giles, of Dallas, TX; and several nieces and nephews. Barbara was predeceased by her beloved husband, Robert J. Soponski, who passed in 1991, and her sister, Goldie (White) Roy Studley.

Barbara was born in Worcester, daughter of the late Henry M. and Goldie (Pettis) White. She was raised and educated in Worcester, graduating with Commerce High School's Class of 1945. Barbara then attended and graduated from the Elizabeth Ollis School of Cosmetology in Worcester.

She had an extensive career as a trusted hairdresser to many beloved clients in the Auburn/Worcester area. Barbara first began working at Stanhope Beauty Salon in Worcester, then Barry's Beauty Salon in Auburn for over 25 years. After retiring, she worked part time for Bill Wallace, the original owner of Wallace Funeral Home.

Barbara, in her free time, volunteered at the Auburn Senior Center for around 20 years. She was part of the "Red Hat Honeys," of which she was Past "Queen," and was a member of the High School Reunion Committee for many years. Above all, family was her everything, and some of her favorite memories were spent camping with family and friends.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Jewish Healthcare Hospice (<https://www.jhccenter.org/make-a-donation/>).

Barbara's family would like to thank the staff of Christopher House for their wonderful care.



We continue conversations about virtual worship, online safety, and how to best share our message AND do so while respecting the privacy of our children. Please speak to Pastor Julie if you would like to join a team working on safety and social media concerns.

ON A MISSION! LA ROMANA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



**BEAUTIFUL
DRESSES!**



FROM OUR OUTREACH COMMITTEE



Community Housing Coalition of Madison County

798 Walnut Creek Rd
 P.O. Box 1166, Marshall, North Carolina 28753
 Phone: 828-649-1200 |
www.chcmadisoncountync.org

February 6, 2025

First Congregational Church
 Attn: Jennifer Bohn
 128 Central Street
 Auburn, MA 01501

To all at First Congregational Church,

On behalf of Community Housing Coalition (CHC) staff, board members, and our clients throughout Madison County, please accept our gratitude for your generous donations given in support of our urgent repair programs by individual parishioners and through the church's Sibley Fund Endowment.

While 2024 had promised to deliver growing need in our county, with an increasingly scarce housing stock continuing to fall into disrepair and a growing population of aging adults, we had no idea that Hurricane Helene would hit and have her way with Western North Carolina and beyond. It left so many *more* in need of a home, home repairs or major rehabilitation.

Your generosity comes at a critical time in the lives of our neighbors. We appreciate all your support. We are encouraged by the collection you gathered and honored that the Outreach Committee chose to contribute to CHC as we move into our long-term recovery plans.

With sincere gratitude and best wishes,

Cathy Dalton
 Director of Fund Development and Communications
 Community Housing Coalition of Madison County NC
 Tax ID/EIN: 11-3660564

Community Housing Coalition of Madison County is a 501(c)3 independent non-profit organization. Your contribution is tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. No goods or services were provided in exchange for your contribution.

Tim Malone, Chair | Danalee Cook-Pipes, Co-Chair | Sidney Mashburn, Treasurer | Graeme Frelick, Secretary
 Emily Wood | Ann Harold | Patricia Ruscoe | Gratin Smith | Jill Cleveland | Dan Olson | Steve Wilde | Callis Chambliss
 Chris Watson, Executive Director


An independent non-profit, improving housing and building community, one house and one neighbor at a time.

MONTHLY CALENDAR

First Congregational Church
 128 Central St.
 Auburn, MA 01501
 Web: www.auburnfirststucc.org



SUNDAY WORSHIP & SUNDAY SCHOOL 10AM
 Office Hours Mon-Fri 9:30-2:30PM
 508-832-2845

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
		COFFEE HOUR HOSTS				
3/2 Pakachoag	3/16 Trustees & Prudential Cmtes					
3/9 Stewardship Cmte	3/23 Monts Family & Mem'l/Sch, Nom, Lib Cmtes					
	3/30 Music Cmte & Historian					
2 10 a.m.: Communion Sun. At Pakachoag Church	3 4:30-6:30 p.m.: Girl Scouts 6:30 p.m.: HWG Board	4 9 a.m.: Auburn Comfort Blankets (ACB) 12:30-2 p.m.: Bible study	5 7 p.m.: Ash Wednesday Service	6 9 a.m.: ACB 7-8:30 p.m.: Boy Scouts 7 p.m.: Boy Scouts (Green Room)	7 4:30-6 p.m.: Girl Scouts 5-9 p.m.: Cub Scouts Crossover Event	8 9-11 a.m.: Women's Fellowship 5 p.m.: Church Supper w/Scouts
9 10 a.m.: Sunday Worship & Sunday School	10 5:45-7:15 p.m.: Brownies	11 9 a.m.: Auburn Comfort Blankets (ACB) 12:30-2 p.m.: Bible study 7 p.m.: Prudential	12 6 p.m.: Choir 6 p.m.: BOCE 6:30-8 p.m.: Cub Scouts	13 9 a.m.: ACB 5-6:30 p.m.: Girl Scouts 5:30-7 p.m.: Lenten Series 7-8:30 p.m.: Boy Scouts 7 p.m. Deacons	14 4:30-6 p.m.: Girl Scouts 5-7 p.m.: HWG Shamrock Social	15 8 a.m.-12 noon: CPR 10 a.m.: Bell Choir
16 10 a.m.: Sunday Worship & Sunday School Music Committee following worship	17 4:30-6:30 p.m.: Girl Scouts 	18 9 a.m.: (ACB) Auburn Comfort Blankets 10:30 a.m.: Outreach 12:30-2 p.m.: Bible study	19 6 p.m.: Choir 6:30-8 p.m.: Cub Scouts	20 9 a.m.: ACB 9-11 a.m.: HWG Open House 5:30-7 p.m.: Lenten Series 7-8:30 p.m.: Boy Scouts 7 p.m. Trustees	21 4:30-6 p.m.: Girl Scouts 6-9 p.m.: WF Paint Night (FH)	22 10 a.m.: Bell Choir
23 10 a.m.: Sunday Worship & Sunday School	24 5:45-7:15 p.m.: Brownies	25 9 a.m.: Auburn Comfort Blankets (ACB) 12:30-2 p.m.: Bible study	26 6 p.m.: Choir 6:30-8 p.m.: Cub Scouts	27 9 a.m.: ACB 5-6:30 p.m.: Girl Scouts 5:30-7 p.m.: Lenten Series 7-8:30 p.m.: Boy Scouts 7 p.m. Council	28	29 10 a.m.: Bell Choir
30 10 a.m.: Sunday Worship & Sunday School	31					

Soup and Sandwich Supper



THURSDAY NIGHT LENTEN SERIES 5:30-7 p.m. SOUP & SANDWICH PROVIDERS:

3/13	Board of Deacons
3/20	Music Committee
3/27	Memorial/Scholarship Committee & Stewardship Committee
4/3	Board of Christian Ed. (BOCE)
4/10	Outreach Committee

For Lent, 1966 by Madeline L'Engle

It is my Lent to break my Lent,
To eat when I would fast,
To know when slender strength is spent,
Take shelter from the blast
When I would run with wind and rain,
To sleep when I would watch.
It is my Lent to smile at pain
But not ignore its touch.
It is my Lent to listen well
When I would be alone,
To talk when I would rather dwell
In silence, turn from none
Who call on me, to try to see
That what is truly meant
Is not my choice. If Christ's I'd be
It's thus I'll keep my Lent.



THANK YOU FOR A SUCCESSFUL MISSION!

We served over 600 people in our medical clinics in the sugar cane villages of La Romana, Dominican Republic, bringing medicine and healing, supplies and love, education and care. We completed construction projects, ran programs for children, and brought your prayers, donations, and homemade dresses with us. Thank you. Thank you!

This is an annual trip, and all are welcome to join me in February 2026.



BIBLE STUDY OPPORTUNITIES

Tuesdays at 12:30 p.m. – We aim to finish the Gospel of Mary Magdalene and academic commentary before Easter! We continue to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Tuesdays, come early for lunch.

Thursday Evening Bible Study – Due to the Lenten series, we will move the time and date through the Easter Season to Sunday after worship (and a little coffee hour time), 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the conference room. We will meet on the following Sundays: March 23rd, and April 6th.



2025 LENTEN CALENDAR

- MARCH 5 ASH WEDNESDAY
- APRIL 13 PALM/PASSION SUNDAY
- APRIL 17 MAUNDY THURSDAY
- APRIL 18 GOOD FRIDAY
- APRIL 20 EASTER SUNDAY



LENTEN CALENDAR

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. 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
 Email: secretary@auburnfirstucc.org
 or pastor@auburnfirstucc.org
*God's church in Auburn Center
 doing Christ's work in the world.*
 Web: auburnfirstucc.org



PLEASE NOTE:

Beginning this month, we will no longer be mailing the monthly *Tidings*. If you would like to receive an electronic copy monthly, please email

secretary@auburnfirstucc.org

with your email address. There will be a limited number of printed copies available at church each month.

March 2025

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16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					