



# 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!'"*

We have found our new pastor!

We would like to introduce our candidate, Brian Michael Grover. After reviewing countless profiles and conducting dozens of phone, Skype and personal interviews we have determined that Brian is a perfect fit for our church.

Brian is 43 and originally from northern New Hampshire. He received his Masters in Divinity from Bangor Theological Seminary in 1998 and was ordained in 1999. He has been serving his current church, Congregational UCC of Huron, South Dakota, since July 2001. In his life before seminary, Brian served five years as an officer in the US Army including five months in Operation Desert Storm and received his call to ministry in the desert of Iraq.

The following is a paragraph from Brian's profile that attracted us and made us want to schedule an initial interview. "I think the church can resemble a large extended family. It is one of the few places in our society that allows people of several generations to interact. I find I have been attracted to churches with a strong component of older members. I find it important to have a strong group of older members, they often stabilize the church. The problem is to stabilize the church without letting it harden into rigidity and stop growing. Too often society separates the generations. I enjoy the opportunity to listen to the voice of wisdom one day and the next day enjoy the energy and play of youth."

Jennie is Brian's wife of three years and is a teacher. Foster parenting is near and dear to Jennie and Brian. They have raised 3 foster sons. Brian has also been actively involved in Rotary, Cub Scouts, past Commander of VFW and American Legion Posts.

It is our plan to bring Brian and Jennie out for his candidating weekend Thursday, February 24th - Sunday, February 27th. The weekend will culminate with Brian preaching on Sunday, the 27th, with a congregational vote immediately following the service. If all goes well, and it is a "positive" vote, Brian's first day of work will be June 1st with his first Sunday preaching June 5th.

The following is a tentative schedule for candidating weekend to give everyone a chance to meet Brian prior to his sermon on February 27th. These are going to be casual get-to-know-you meetings and the potluck suppers are open to the congregation at large.

- |                 |          |   |
|-----------------|----------|---|
| Fri., Feb. 25th | 11:00 AM | Prudential, Auditor, Administrator and Financial Secretaries                                |
|                 | 2:00 PM  | Library and Memorial Committees   |
|                 | 3:00 PM  | Board of Education (including teachers)   |
|                 | 4:30 PM  | STAFF Craig Premo, Denise Jobin, Heather Moore, Dawn Murphy, Jean McPherson & Deb Pranaitis |
|                 | 6:00 PM  | POTLUCK SUPPER (PSC members: Jen Temple, Rich McPherson, Pat Bukoski & Ernie Smith)         |
| Sat., Feb. 26th | 10:00 AM | Stewardship   |
|                 | 11:30 AM | Music Committee   |
|                 | 1:30 PM  | Trustees  |
|                 | 3:00 PM  | Deacons   |
|                 | 5:00 PM  | Outreach & Nominating   |
|                 | 6:00 PM  | POTLUCK SUPPER (PSC members: Ron Klaucke, Lori Stockhaus, Joyce Ringgard & Jen Bohn)        |

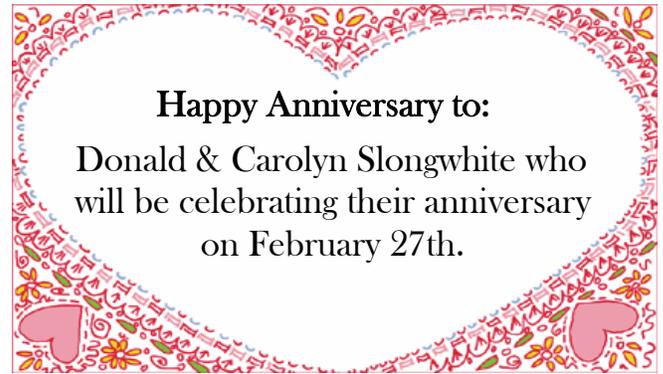
Do not panic if you cannot make it to your committee's assigned meeting time; as I said before this is just a chance for Brian to meet some of the congregation in smaller groups. If you cannot make it to a meeting, or are not currently serving on a committee, just come and meet Brian and Jennie at one of the potluck suppers. Please feel free to contact any member of the Pastoral Search Committee if you have any questions.

In His Service,

Pastoral Search Committee: Jen Bohn, Lori Stockhaus, Ron Klaucke, Joyce Ringgard, Jen Temple, Pat Bukoski, Rich McPherson and Ernie Smith

Coffee Hour Hosts

Feb 6/13	Library Committee
Feb 20/Feb 27	Stewardship Committee
Mar 6/13	Outreach Committee



DEAR CHURCH MEMBERS:

WE NEED YOUR HELP! The Confirmation Class will be participating in

**HAND TO HAND/HEART TO HEART: SCHOOL KITS AND PATHS OF JUSTICE**

On Saturday, March 5th, as part of the Massachusetts Conference United Church of Christ Super Saturday, the Confirmation Class will be assembling school kits for Church World Service. School kits give children in impoverished schools, refugee camps, or other difficult settings some of the basic tools for learning.

The Confirmation Class needs your help to gather the supplies. A school kit consists of:

- 1 pair of blunt metal scissors (rounded tip)
- 3 70 count spiral notebooks or notebooks totaling 200-210 pages (no loose-leaf/filler paper)
- 1 30 centimeter ruler (12")
- 1 hand-held pencil sharpener
- 1 large eraser
- 6 new pencils with erasers
- 1 box of 24 crayons (only 24)
- 1 12" x 14" to 14"x 17" finished size cotton or light weight canvas bag with cloth handles.  
(Please, no reusable shopping bags or backpacks.)

Thanks so much for your school supply donations toward this outreach project.  
A box designated for this collection can be found in Fellowship Hall.

**COMMUNITY ROAST BEEF SUPPER**

Sat. February 19th at 5 pm      \$10.00 - adults      \$5.00 - children



Please join us for a delicious roast beef supper and scrumptious dessert, followed by a travelogue of the Luthers' trip to Alaska.

(KITCHEN VOLUNTEERS NEEDED)

New Life

Chapter 37 of the prophet Ezekiel tells of the remarkable event in *the Valley of Dry Bones*. We should have no confusion over who and what this means. Verse 11 makes it clear when God addresses Ezekiel and tells him: *Mortal, these bones are the whole House of Israel. They say, "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost..."*

We are told from the beginning that what happens is a *spiritual* event. In verse one, the prophet declares: *The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley...* We are familiar with what happens next: The bones rise up and stand. Then sinews appear and bind them together. Flesh comes upon them to fill them out, and skin appears to cover them.

Finally, as verse 10 says, *Breath came into them, and they lived...* Verse 11 follows and identifies who they are, as we said above. These are *the whole House of Israel*, which means *the chosen people of God*. That means us - *the Church today*. In too many places today, *the Church is a valley of dry bones* until God breathes new life into us.

We learn several important things from this text. One is that bone, sinew, flesh, skin, and breath are each necessary for the whole to live. Secondly, this text speaks to us not merely as individual persons, but as *the whole people of God*. The Church needs bone, sinew, flesh, skin, and breath to be a living community. Finally, God does not act on his own. He does not wave a magic wand for the dry bones to stand up and live. The Lord works *in partnership with human agency* - in this case, the prophet Ezekiel. At each step, the Lord *instructs Ezekiel* what to do. If Ezekiel fails to do his part, nothing will happen by the Lord's hand alone.

Consider the parts. The bones are the framework. The framework of the Church is the liturgy, the sacraments, and an orderly approach to the scriptures through the lectionary. A proper framework has been lost by many churches today that rely only on random topical preaching.

The sinews are the history and teaching tradition, the ancient confessions and creeds of the faith that reach back to Apostolic Order. Again, this is lost in churches today that rely only on what "great thoughts" pop into the preacher's head, or on an idiosyncratic interpretation of scripture.

The flesh is the community of believers who *claim their own authority* in the faith because they are *informed* about their faith. The skin is the prayer and praise they offer to make their presentation to the world.

Finally, the "breath" of God is *the Holy Spirit*. Without a *charismatic anointing*, faith is not animated. It may look good on paper or sound good in word and song, but it has no life. The end of verse 8 leads into verses 9 and 10. There, Ezekiel views the resurrection of the bones completed with flesh and skin, and says, *But there was no breath in them...* The Lord then says, *Prophesy to the breath and say: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."*

Ezekiel then reports: *I prophesied as the Lord commanded me, and the breath came into them and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude...* In the original Hebrew, the English words "wind," "breath," and "spirit" are the same. Without the anointing of the Lord Holy Spirit, we are nothing.

- Pastor Duke

**SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS**

Applications are now available in Fellowship Hall, and in the church office for anyone interested in applying for a scholarship.

**Applications are due  
by April 15th.**

**JOYFUL NOYSE SCHEDULE**

2/6, 2/13, 2/20 ~ 11:15 a.m. rehearsal

2/27 ~ 9:15 a.m. rehearsal  
"Wonderful, Merciful Savior"



February is American Heart Month, Low Vision Awareness Month, and National Children's Dental Health Month. February 4th is National Wear Red Day. It is also Give Kids a Smile Day. The 7th-14th is Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Week. The 13th-19th is Children of Alcoholics Week and the 14th is National Donor Day.

I have sent away for new information from the American Heart Association and will have it on the table in Fellowship Hall. I have ordered a cookbook that I will be happy to lend to anyone that is interested.

The equipment in the closet comes and goes. If you need something and don't see it in the closet, please let me know because some people are kind enough to store things that don't fit in the closet. So just because there isn't something in the closet, I might know where you can get one. People from town have heard about my closet and I've gotten calls from people to donate things when they no longer need them.

Stay warm, and be careful on the ice if you go out.

God Bless!

Debbie Pranaitis, Parish Nurse

Pictured below are some children from Haiti in their "Sunday Best." This picture was taken during Jen and Randy Bohn's recent missions trip to Haiti. Leftover money, along with individual donations, were used to purchase these "special occasion" clothes for the children. They have NEVER had anything brand new so this was a pretty exciting Christmas for them. (Please continue to pray for the people of Haiti.)



### **Here We Grow** Preschool

Happy Valentine's Day everyone. So far we have been hit with a few snow days and delayed openings, let's hope for the best. Spring will be here before we know it.



I have been doing one-on-one tours of the school since October and have already met with some wonderful new families whose children will join us next year. Our Open House will be on March 9<sup>th</sup>, from 1:00-2:30. At this time we do have openings in the 3 year old sessions and just a few in the 4 year-old sessions. If you know of a friend, neighbor, or relative who is looking for a preschool, please send them our way.

Continuing into the month of February, **Here We Grow** will be busy with Valentine parties on February 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup>. The children will have the opportunity to share cards and goodies with their friends and teachers.

**Here We Grow** will be running another fundraiser; it will be Hebert Candy Bars and it will run the month of February. If you need or *want* a candy bar, there will be a box with Denise in the church office. Thank you for your support. All monies earned go towards field trips, special programs offered throughout the year, equipment for the classrooms, and enrichment classes offered to the children, (zumba, music, karate and aerobics).

The school will be closed for winter break from 2/21-2/25. We hope everyone enjoys special days with their children over this vacation.

Until next month, stay warm and be healthy.

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

Massachusetts Conference United Church of Christ

### **SUPER SATURDAY!**

Saturday, March 5, 2011 8 a.m to 3 p.m.  
Ludlow High School, 500 Chapin Street, Ludlow, MA

Join hundreds of delegates, pastors and lay leaders from all over the Conference for our second **SUPER SATURDAY** - a full day of workshops and networking around best practices for church leaders.

With 35 new and repeat workshops and worship featuring several provocative Conference pastors, this day will have something for everyone in your church - educators, mission committee members, clergy, deacons, treasurers and others - so we hope you'll gather a team and make your way to Ludlow! Workshop sizes are limited and will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis, so please register early. Register online at:  
[www.macucc.org/supersaturday](http://www.macucc.org/supersaturday)

Please mark your calendars for the 212th Annual Meeting to be held in Sturbridge on June 18, 2011.

Happy Valentine's Day! Hopefully in the past few weeks you have seen the younger members of our church family sharing God's love while they shared the trail mix we made in class, or received a blessing paper as we learned that we all are God's blessings ALL the time.

I am VERY excited and thankful that Janice Green has joined the Sunday School class and is working with grades 5-8. Thank you, Janice. Now that we can split the group, I feel everyone will get more age-appropriate instruction.

The confirmation class is in full swing with 6 young and eager participants. Later this spring we will be participating in the City Reach program with Ecclesia Ministries Common Cathedral in Boston. The per person cost has gone up over the past year so we will be doing some fundraising to help offset the cost. Our first Fundraiser will be a candy/bake sale for Valentine's Day on Feb. 13. Anyone wishing to contribute is more than welcome.

Once again we will be assisting with the Special Olympics held at Auburn High School. This is open to any and all volunteers. We are planning to help on March 12th from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., but you can sign-up for the time slot that works for you. Please let me know A.S.A.P. if you're interested so I can get our name in as a group.

I want to thank those committees that have already signed up to give a 15 minute talk about your committee's purpose and place in the congregation. We feel that as these new confirmands enter the church they should know all that is available to them so they may share their talents for God's glory and become an ACTIVE member of the congregation. The confirmands will be acting as "assistants" in cradle roll weekly. I would like to remind parents that there is no coverage for cradle roll until 9:45 a.m. each week. Please keep that in mind and either plan to stay down with your child until that time, or keep them with you. We all want to keep the children safe.

Thank you to Jen Bohn for volunteering to Chair the Board of Ed, also to returning members Gayle Farley, Marion Woodcock and Ron Hanks. Unfortunately, no one has stepped up to fill our open spots. I would also like to thank Ellie Lowell who was our fearless leader this past year. Thank you, Ellie, or as you are now affectionately called "the craft lady" by the younger members. Anyone wishing to join the Board of Ed please speak with Jennifer Bohn.

On February 4th, Jen Bohn, Mike Schillinger and I, along with possibly 7 teens, will be heading up to Camp Berea on Newfound Lake in Hebron N.H. We would appreciate your prayers that the Lord will speak to everyone in attendance and show the glory of His word and how it is alive and growing in young and old alike.

With His guidance we serve,  
Jean McPherson  
Director of Christian Education

The Spirit Suppers are held on the third Wednesday of the month. Remember, this is a casual, potluck supper designed to allow an informal setting for fellowship with our church family. **ALL ARE WELCOME.**  
**The next supper will be held on Wednesday, February 16th at 6 p.m. We hope you can join us!**



## Library Tidings by Gloria Whitehead

This has been perfect weather to find a warm corner, with a warm cover to curl up with a cozy book like *The Blue Moon*. Barely into a few pages it becomes evident that Lorena McCartney is a descriptive author. Things become alive in breath-taking scenery and the surroundings of Sparrow Island in the San Juans.

Abby Stanton, the assistant curator at a nature conservatory, is struggling to open the bottom drawer in her handsome old desk – now almost efficiently cleaned. Finally, out comes the drawer from a mess of stuck paper and tape and Abby frees a sack. Another snip and a flat oblong box is revealed. How odd. But when she opened the box she was astonished beyond words. Its contents holds a necklace of incredible beauty. Its design, enhanced the brilliance and depth of the large blue diamond surrounded by a border of small diamonds which hung pendant style from a big twisted strand of tiny stones. What in the world was this doing in Abby's desk drawer? How had it gotten there? Who did it belong to? Oh! What about the note with "To Claudia" written on it?

And here the tale begins, the mystery expands, and the solution unfolds. Well, you didn't think I was going to give you the solution, did you? And we'll begin to count the ensuing cast of characters – in order of appearance, well almost, the staff of the nature conservatory: a sheriff, the grandson of a hardware store owner, same for a jewelry store, a doctor – more than sixteen (characters) and 2 dogs. But its becoming evident that Abby has to put a lid on her imagination while being responsible for a likely undervalued 3 million dollar piece of jewelry. The circle of those involved is widening as the mystery becomes more intriguing. You'll find the book on the Adult Library table unless someone has beat you to it. If so, it's worth waiting for its return. Our appreciation to Gloria Beauregard for gifting this book.

The Board of Christian Education has gifted a new DVD entitled, *It's a Meaningful Life*, to the Children's Library. It was shown on Parents' Night during the Christmas Season – many thanks.

### Fire Alarm Fund

As many of you know the church was completely destroyed by fire in 1896. We have therefore started a Fire Alarm fund to save up money to outfit the church with a fire alarm system. We have already received a \$10,000 anonymous donation to start funding this system, and anticipate we will need an additional \$25,000. If you would like to contribute please write "Fire Alarm" on your donation.

Thank you!

### INTERESTED IN BECOMING A MEMBER?

If you would like information about becoming a member of First Congregational Church in Auburn, please plan to join us for two orientation sessions to be held after worship services on February 6th and 13th with a reception of new members taking place on Sunday, February 20th.

### CRADLE ROLL

2/6 Marion Woodcock	2/13 Rich McPherson
2/20 Eric Cove	2/27 NO CRADLE ROLL
3/6 Cindy Dube	3/13 Diane Moore



**FRIENDLY REMINDER TO ALL PARENTS:** There is no Cradle Roll coverage until 9:45 a.m. Please keep that in mind and either plan to stay downstairs with your children, or keep them with you upstairs until that time. Thank you! Also, there will be no Cradle Roll on Feb. 27th to allow everyone the opportunity to be in service to hear and welcome Pastor Brian and his wife, Jennie.

**Tidings 2011**

**Subscription Renewal Form**

In an effort to offset the cost 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  
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*Thank You!*

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Pastor's Office Day: Thursday

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