

FEBRUARY
2021

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

We are entering the 12th month of the lockdown. Every day the COVID numbers are announced, and we are informed of more deaths. Darkness and scary news are a good reason to be sad or even depressed. But dealing with sadness by yourself is not the best way to deal with sadness. Reach out! People love to help.

COVID is an added burden to a month that, even in a good year, is no one's favorite. Winter by now is wearing out its welcome. We are all ready for more sunlight and more warmth.

The only good news about February is that it is only 28 days. March might be as cold and snowy as February, but it will have more light.

Even February has good in it. We will gain an hour of sunlight in the month of February. Things are getting better. There is more light today than yesterday.

The vaccine is coming out. More and more people will receive it. People will feel better about the disease and things will be better because we feel better. We just need to keep being careful until then.

I wonder how you are holding on? Will you be relieved when this is all over? Have you planned the things you are going to do after you get the vaccine? What have you missed from this last year? For me, it was coffee hour — just a light conversation with caffeine and a snack. I really took that pleasure for granted.

Or will you be discouraged that things are still harder than they should be? Life is often hard. Life will be hard after COVID is less of a threat. We can deal with what life sends our way, especially if we come at the problem calmly and with a generous spirit — to help when people need help and to ask for help when we need it.

There are lots of people who want to help. If you feel stress weighing you down, please reach out. People want to help, please let them.

God Bless,

Pastor Brian

SERMON TITLES

Feb. 7	“There’s a lot of People in that House”
Feb. 14	“Who Are the Lepers?”
Feb. 17	“Ash Wednesday”
Feb. 21	“Transfigured to Prepare for Easter”
Feb. 28	“Doing Good?!”



**JOIN US FOR OUR ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE
BEGINNING AT 7 P.M. ON
FEBRUARY 17.**

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Happy Valentine's Day to all of you!

Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act. ~ Psalm 37:5

As we enter another year filled with COVID-19, I rely on this psalm to guide me and give me hope. My faith has been strengthened this past year, but it has also been tested, as I am sure it has been for all of you. The vaccine is being distributed, and it appears we are closer to getting a handle on the virus.

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. ~ Jeremiah 29:11

February is the month of love. This month, as you think of how you will celebrate Valentine's Day, remember that it is the small things that mean so much; the love of family, friends, and your church family have helped you through a very tough time.

In January I had planned to have the Sunday school kids greet you with a front lawn full of snow angels and snowmen but the weather had a different idea. I hope we are able to get the kids together soon for some socially distanced fun, with or without snow. Stay tuned for plans in progress.

No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. 1John 4:12

Happy Valentine's Day to you all.

Holding you up in my prayers,

Jean McPherson, Director of Religious Education



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH'S 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, of course, we have several unrestricted scholarships as well. Please email the church office at secretary@auburnfirstucc.org or call 508-832-2845 to request an application. Applications are due by April 15th.

Reminder from the Treasurer

I would like to remind everyone that any requests for reimbursements need to have receipts submitted whenever available. Also, please 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 goes for any purchases made on the Church's credit card.

Thank you for your cooperation and understanding.

Nick Stockhaus, Treasurer



February is National Heart Month, National Children's Dental Health Month, AMD/Low Vision Awareness Month, and Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month.

My big news this month is that Vrushank Patel, the pharmacist from the Auburn Pharmacy, called me and offered to open his pharmacy on Sunday, March 28th, to administer the COVID vaccine. He doesn't have the vaccine yet, but is in close contact with the Boston Department of Public Health, and he is watching the webinars to stay up-to-date.

We will have to go in the pharmacy, a couple at a time, and you have to wait 15 minutes after to make sure there is no immediate reaction. I am taking names of those interested, and I will pass the latest information on to you as soon as I hear from him. My cell is 508-612-4521 and my email is debpra@charter.net. This will help me to organize and, hopefully, keep things going smoothly. He thinks he will get the Moderna brand, but if that changes, I will let you know.

God Bless! Stay Safe!

Debbie Pranaitis
Parish Nurse

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

THANKS
FROM THE
HEART

Laura Koopman is very appreciative of everyone who remembered her at Christmas.

LENTEN SERIES

We are likely to still be social distancing in February and March. SOOO I am planning to do movie nights in Lent.

This year we are going to do a virtual movie night, rather than our soup and sandwich gatherings.

The movies suggested are:

Sister Act

Invictus

Veggie Tales Esther

Evan Almighty

and *Prince of Egypt* or *The 10 Commandments*.

As we get closer to Lent, we will have guides for where to stream the movies and guides on issues the movie raises. We may have movie discussion Zoom meetings as well.

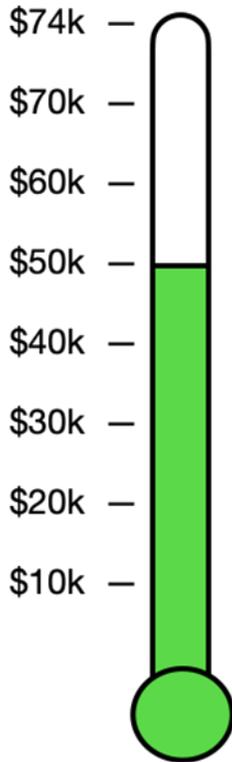
So, stay tuned . . .

Pastor Brian

First Congregational Church Boiler Fund

Donation Goal: **\$74,137**

Donation Total: **\$48,075**
65% of goal



Thank you to all who have donated and/or pledged to the Capital Campaign so far. We will be including in the *Tidings* and weekly bulletins a moving thermometer to show our progress on this campaign. We are still looking for ~ \$26,000 to help return the borrowed funds to the church's invested funds.

You can pledge over the 3 year plan*, make a one time donation, or donate from your own invested funds to this project. For those who have been in the sanctuary, we hope that you are enjoying the warmth from the new system.

Board of Trustees

* Please complete the pledge portion below if you would like to pledge over the 3 year plan.

Please complete this pledge form and return as soon as possible to church address below.

I answer the Trustees' call to support financially the New Boiler Project. As part of my response, I will give \$_____ as my (circle one)

Weekly / Monthly / Quarterly / Annual contribution

for a total of \$_____ during 2021 through 2023.

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please return to: First Congregational Church, 128 Central St., Auburn, MA 01501

Here We Grow Preschool



Here We Grow has started enrollment for next year, and our four-year-old classes are filling up. We are not sure that we are going to be able to host a traditional Open House at this time, but we are offering tours in the evenings and on weekends, if you know of a friend, neighbor, or relative who is looking for a preschool.

When thinking about whether to send your child to preschool for the first time, keep in mind what you are hoping to get out of the experience. We start accepting children when they are 2 years nine months and, for them, our focus is all about social/ emotional growth, which means getting along in a group, taking directions from adults other than Mom and Dad, and learning to share. For children getting ready for Kindergarten, we are focusing more on academic skills such as learning about letters and numbers and printing their names while still providing social skills. We are also fortunate to be able to offer a class for young 4-year-olds. This class is designed for those children who may have already done a year of preschool and need an extra year because they do not make the kindergarten cutoff in their town. For more information about any of our classes, please feel free to stop in the office or call 508-832-8184.

We delayed our return to school after the New Year, just in case families attended gatherings over the holidays. Our hope was that any illnesses would be gone by the time we returned to school. So we could still offer the same number of school days, the teachers gave up February break this year. We will be closed on February 15 for Presidents' Day, but will be here the rest of the week.

For those of you who have participated in the past, we will still be doing our annual calendar raffle giveaway, but we pushed it back a month. We will be selling the tickets during the month of March and pulling winners in April this year. We are also still collecting sneakers for our shoe drive fundraiser. There is a box in fellowship hall for donations. We thank you for your continued support.

Stay healthy and have a great month!

Cristi Corey, Director, **Here We Grow** Preschool

2021 COMMITTEE NOMINEES STILL NEEDED

At our Annual Meeting on January 24th, the Nominating Committee presented their report with the new and recommitted nominees to Boards and Committees. **However, openings still remain. Of particular concern is the amount of openings on the Board of Trustees and the Board of Deacons, as they may run into trouble with meeting quorum requirements. (Many committee meetings are held via Zoom at this time.)**

BOARD OF TRUSTEES: two vacancies of 3 year terms and two vacancies of 2 year terms.

BOARD OF DEACONS: Listed in our By-Laws there should be 12 Deacons; however, if one vacancy of 3 year term and/or one for 1 year term could be filled for meeting decisions/quorum requirement; then, the Deacons would utilize age appropriate acolytes for the church service only.

BOARD OF EDUCATION: one vacancy of 1 year term and one vacancy of 3 year term.

THANK YOU to all who have already committed to joining one or more of our various committees and boards. The Nominating Committee will continue to search for support throughout the year as long as there are vacancies open.

If you are a church member and interested in filling a nomination, please contact one of the following Nominating Committee Members or the church office. Contacts: Judi Taft may be reached at 508-341-4530 or email jtaft01527@aol.com. Sheila Skog may be reached at (978) 387-7705 or sheilaskog@gmail.com. Sue MacPhee may be reached at: 508-864-2454 or email susiemac2002@gmail.com. Thank you for your help!



During times of inclement weather, we have set up an account with WCVB-TV Channel 5 enabling us to report Church service cancellations. However, we've been told that when there are numerous cancellations, as a small organization, our cancellation may only appear on their website, thebostonchannel.com. We will also post cancellations on Facebook.

Please keep in mind that if weather is severe enough to result in area power outages, we may not have the capability to contact these outlets. So you should always use your best judgment, exercising caution when deciding whether to venture out to service during stormy weather.



TIDINGS is a monthly publication of

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

Web: auburnfirstucc.org



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February 2021

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OR CURRENT RESIDENT