

January
2005

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!’”

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Calendar Insert

From the Pastor

In summarizing the activities of all the committees this year in reports for the annual meeting on January 15, 2005, we realize we have accomplished much! Many committees and volunteers have been very faithful to the variety of responsibilities they have. But we need to face the elephant sitting in our own living room.

Participation and support shrink each year. This is an almost universal problem in mainline churches. In Central Massachusetts, 80% of the U.C.C. churches carried deficits last year and I am sure finances will be tighter for all this coming year. But we do not need to be part of that trend. If all of our members participated and supported the church, we could be an exception rather than part of the trend.

It may seem like a small thing to skip a few Sundays, pass up leadership opportunities, and quit pledging as we assume that others will carry the load, but this assumption is costly to the church. Your church needs you. Your faith needs expression. God appreciates committed believers. Christ seeks faithful disciples.

Help 2005 become a banner year for First Congregational Church!!!

Rev. Dr. Kenneth E. Knox
Pastor

Begin
the
Year
with
God

In a Pastoral letter from our Conf. Minister regarding the devastating tidal waves in Asia:

*I have come into deep waters,
and the flood sweeps over
me...*

Rescue me...

let me be delivered...

*Do no let the flood sweep
over me,*

or the deep swallow me up

*or the Pit close its mouth over
me. (Psalm 69:2, 14-15)*

In the act of prayer we hold these sisters and brothers in our hearts. Through our pray we refuse to let them drown alone, or suffer alone, or grieve alone, or rescue alone.

Through the UCC, you are an arm extended, a gift of food, a warm blanket. You are a part of a global alliance of churches and related agencies working to save lives and support communities in emergencies worldwide.

Our dollars are already at work through Church World Service. If you would like to help, please make your check payable to:

First Congregational Church
Memo: "for Asia Tidal Waves"

Nancy S. Taylor
Minister and President
Massachusetts Conference of
the United Church of Christ

Here We Grow!

As I write this report, I realize you will be reading it in a brand new year. What ever happened to 2004?

The *Here We Grow!* children and staff were quite busy during the month of December. Once again the families were very giving with donations of new, unwrapped toys which were brought in to be given to children who were less fortunate. The Marines came to *Here We Grow!* to pick up quite a few large trash bags filled with all kinds of toys. What a wonderful way for the children to learn about giving!



Here We Grow! hosted our 9th annual *Gingerbread House Day* on Saturday, December 4th. We sold about 270 houses, some families choosing to have their house "to go" and many families joining us on Saturday. While watching the children "create", I realized that as much of the candy was put on the house, also was it put in their tummies. It was a fun day for all.

With January and a new year here, *Here We Grow!* is preparing for the school year 2005-2006. At this time our 4 year old spots our almost filled. We do have spots available in our AM and PM sessions for 3 year olds. If you know of anyone with a 3 or 4 year old, please send them our way.

Have you ever thought about working with young children or maybe you have taken some early childhood classes and would like to put them to use? If so, give *Here We Grow!* a call, we just may have a job for you. The icing on the cake - you would touch the lives of a child and also work with a great group of ladies. Again, our telephone number is 508-832-8184.

The staff of *Here We Grow!* hopes everyone had a happy holiday and a safe New Year. Until next month, stay healthy and warm.

Sincerely,

Dawn Murphy
Director
Here We Grow! Preschool



Jackie and I wish to thank all the members and families of First Congregational Church for the many kindnesses and remembrances shown us this Advent/Christmas season. The check we received on Christmas Eve was a wonderful expression of your caring. The individual cards, platters of food, and gifts were also deeply appreciated.
Thank you each and every one!!!

- Ken & Jackie Knox

May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and has given us eternal consolation and good hope by grace, comfort our hearts and strengthen us in every good work and word.
(2 Thessalonians 2:16-17)



Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
(Matthew 5:8-9)

First Congregational Church is planning a theater trip on Sunday, April 10, 2005 to the Phantom of the Opera at the Opera House Theater. Departure will again be at 3 P.M. but the show is later (7:30 P.M.), so we will have more time in the city. The trip will benefit the roofing of the church buildings. There are reservation forms available and payment should accompany the reservation. Cost is \$100 for the bus and the show (approximately \$15 of each reservation will benefit the roof.) We have reserved 55 seats and one bus. All are invited— bring friends and family.

All Orders Due in the office by Jan 7th.

Theater trip to Phantom of the Opera Sunday, April 10, 3-11 P.M.

_____ tickets at \$100 each total _____

Tickets are for:

name _____

name _____

name _____

name _____

name _____

name _____

(for church use)

Wisdom

Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding, for the gain of it is better than gain from silver and its profit better than gold.

(Proverbs 3:13-14)



**MARTIN
LUTHER
KING, JR.
- DAY -**

Monday, January 17

Library Tidings

by Gloria Whitehead

Happy New Year!

Its that NEW BEGINNING! But isn't everyday a new beginning? There are lots of necessities or fixed situations that we must carry with us. But just as we wash our face and brush our teeth for a fresh start in the morning, so we can erase yesterdays blackboard from any troublesome negative attitudes and chalk on some positive energy. Need a little help? Pull up that new "Florence chair" in front of #10 bookshelf and start looking. There is a *big choice* of inspiration among the books which vary from dealing with serious matters, to humor, or finding strength for a heavy heart, to broadening your horizons. Glance at the flaps for a quick contents review. You'll find your God tucked among them all.

Speaking of the "Florence chair", we forgot to tell you earlier that "Here We Grow!" honored Florence LaPlante with a chair also. It's a library chair that converts to a step stool and is way past its initiation at this writing.

It's rewarding to note that adult readers are increasing. The shelves are packed and we're adding those 7 new large print books this month. Rather than list them all here, with a clue to contents, we're listing a few in the succeeding months. In contrast, remember that we'll appreciate if you come upon *any* book which you feel has served it's purpose long ago. Please tell us or pull it from the shelf and leave it with a note on the stand in the Adult Library.

Traveling Light by Max Lucado—"We all lug loads we were never intended to carry. Fear. Worry. Discontent. Let's release some of those burdens." Large Print #10.

Land of My Heart by Tracie Peterson—A young girl urges her family with enthusiasm, to venture West to her uncles ranch in Montana Territory. When tragedy strikes she fears the future in the wide country. Large Print # 1

Again, Happy New Year!
Your Library awaits you!

-The Library Committee



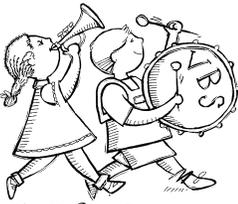
From the Director of Christian Education

A new year! A fresh beginning! A time for looking ahead! With the birth of a new year comes hope and the anticipation of growth and change. If you are like me (and most people), you're apt to break a resolution as fast as you make it. Here is a guide for making New Year's Resolutions that really work!

May your new year be full of wonderful opportunities for growth and change as well as bright hope for each new day.

N	<u>Needed</u>	The resolution must be something that is helpful and necessary to you.
E	<u>Energizing</u>	You've got to be enthusiastic and excited about your plan.
W	<u>Wanted</u>	Make sure it's something you want to accomplish for real.
Y	<u>Yours</u>	It's got to be your own and nobody else's idea.
E	<u>Easy to see</u>	Write the resolution down and put it where you'll see it often.
A	<u>Achievable</u>	No pie-in-the-sky stuff allowed, it must be something you can actually accomplish.
R	<u>Realistic</u>	Remember you are only human. It must be possible (reachable).
S	<u>Specific</u>	The more detail the better. If it is too vague you will never know if you've kept it or not.

February Vacation Bible School



Mark your calendar now for Winter Vacation Bible School. We will be holding Vacation Bible School during the February School Vacation, February 21-25, from 9am until 12 noon.

VBS NEWS

The Theme is Lava Lava Island Where Jesus' Love Flows. See the volcano towering over the jungle. Hear the rumble in the distance. Feel the ground shaking under your feet. You can almost taste the excitement that's building as you head into big adventures at Lava Lava Island, where Jesus' love flows! Join us in the jungles of Lava Lava Island! You'll enjoy special crafts and exciting games, experience thrilling Bible stories, sample tasty snacks, and hear unforgettable music. Plus, you'll meet lots of new friends!

We will need youth and adults to help teach or lead various portions of the program, no previous experience is required and you don't even have to be there every day. Please let me know if you are willing and able to help. Positions that we need to fill include: Snack leader and team, Games leader and team, Bible Story leader, Chadder Video leader, Music Leader and drama team, Craft Leader and team, and helpers of all sorts.

In Christ's Service,
Barb

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sunday Jan. 9th - Bring a friend to church day! - Please consider inviting friends or family members to church. This is an opportunity for *you*, as God's ministers, to invite people to share in God's word. Remember to welcome these visitors with Christian love in your hearts. Show them how God is working in your lives and how He can work in theirs too.

Sunday Jan. 9th Youth On A Mission Mandatory meeting - There will be a MANDATORY meeting after the morning worship service for anyone who is already in *Youth on a Mission* or anyone thinking about joining. Plan on spending at least one hour.



Sunday Jan. 9th from 5 - 9PM Papa Gino's Fundraiser - There will be certificates handed out in church to redeem at Papa Gino's on Southbridge Street in Auburn on Jan. 9th from 5-9PM. *Youth On A Mission* will receive 20% of all proceeds when you present the certificate with your food order. Please get extra certificates to give to your family and friends and encourage them to eat out that evening. We appreciate your support!

Saturday Jan. 15th at 5:00 PM - Meat Loaf Supper - Come and join us for our delicious church supper and enjoy our friendly family style atmosphere. Adults are \$8 and children are \$4.



Monthly Dinner

Offering envelopes are here - They are in the back of the sanctuary for pick up.



New Offering Envelopes

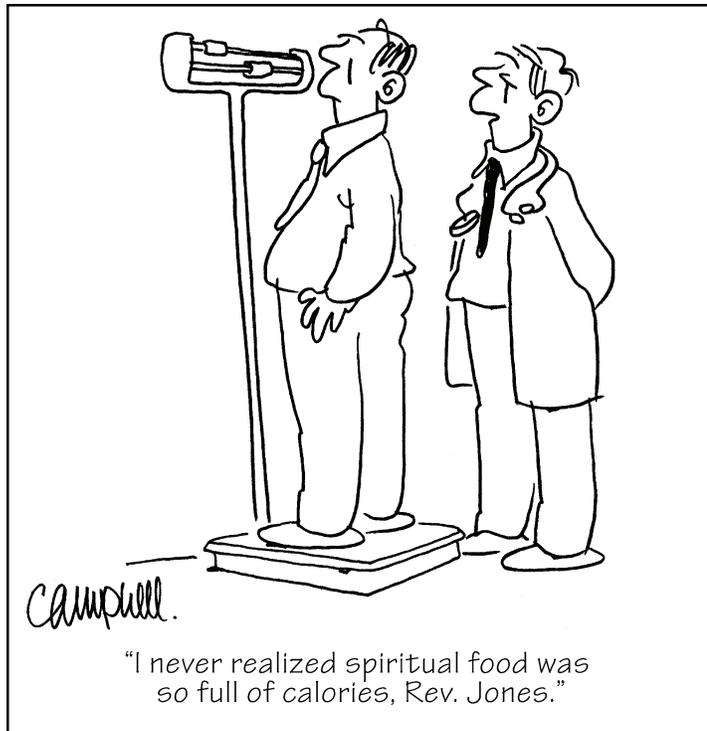
A special thanks...
to Joyful Noyse and our adult choir, for making such beautiful music this season and year round. Your voices truly touch and fill our hearts! Also to Heather, our organist, for all she does to bring music to our lives.

Joyful Noyse Rehearsal Schedule
~~~~~  
Sunday, Jan. 2,9,16 - 11 A.M. rehearsal  
Sunday, Jan. 23 - 9 A.M. rehearsal  
Anthem to be sung: "*In the Bleak Midwinter*"  
Sunday, Jan. 30 - 11 A.M. rehearsal  
~~~~~



Our Sympathies...

to Bob Koopman on the passing of his sister, Wilhelmina Carlson on Dec. 7th.



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From Your Parish Nurse

Happy New Year! January brings us Cataract Awareness Month, National Birth Defects Prevention Month, Thyroid Awareness Month, Cervical Health Awareness Month, and National Volunteer Blood Donor Month. January 16-22 is Healthy Weight Week.

The holidays are past and we've probably all been busy with parties, food, and everything but our health. We should start off the new year with caring for ourselves first, so that we are able to take care of those around us. Like the airline attendants telling us to apply our oxygen masks first, then we can help others.

As we move into the flu season, I can't stress enough about hand washing! It is the best defense in the spread of germs. I'm also working on "End of Life Issues". It is sad to see families go through stressful situations when these arrangements could have all been taken care of ahead of time.

In the Spring I will have some programs for Spring and Summer Safety. I will set these up with speakers from Fairlawn Rehab Hospital.

Again, I pray for a Happy and Healthy New Year for all.

Debbie Pranaitis
Parish Nurse

Tidings - 2005 Subscription Renewal Form

In an effort to offset the costs of publishing the monthly Tidings, we are asking for members and friends to support a voluntary subscription. Your participation in this is entirely optional and will not affect whether or not you receive the Tidings.

- Annual Renewal - \$10
(10 issues, no July or August issue)

Please enclose check or money order for \$10 payable to:

First Congregational Church

Please write **Tidings** in the memo area

Mail to:

First Congregational Church
128 Central Street
Auburn, MA. 01501

Name : _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

May God Bless You!

The Bulletin Board

- Thursday, Jan. 6 Trustees, 6PM
 - Friday, Jan. 7 Phantom of the Opera ticket orders DUE! (Page 3)
 - Sunday, Jan. 9 Bring a Friend to Church Day! (Page 6)
 - Youth on a Mission Mandatory Meeting (Page 6)
 - Youth on a Mission Papa Gino's Fund
 - Raiser 5-9PM (Page 6)
 - Annual Reports Available
 - Saturday, Jan. 15 Annual Meeting (Vestry), 3PM
 - Church Supper, 5PM
 - Monday, Jan. 17 All Committee Mtg, 7PM
 - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
 - Thursday, Jan. 20 Tidings articles due!
 - Sunday, Jan. 23 Office & Committee Installation during Morning Service
- A Look Ahead:
- February 9 Ash Wednesday
 - February 21-25 Vacation Bible School (page 5)
 - March 27 Easter Sunday

This list does not include weekly reoccurring meetings. All meetings are listed on the calendar insert. Please notify the church secretary immediately if something is *not* listed on the calendar. 508-832-2845.

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