



2008

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!’”

From the Pastor

I was recently scouring through some of my old books that need to be thrown out as I slim down my library. In the process, I came across a chapter in one book that told the story of Oresdes Brownson, a Boston preacher who lived in the early 1800's. He was born in Vermont, (an immediate connection) and switched denominations. He was an early advocate for workers' rights. In 1841 he realized that he had watered down the demands of Christianity because he thought he was making it easier for unbelievers to become Christians. He discovered that he won more converts when he began preaching about the demands Christianity puts upon people. Christ had not been timid about his demands on his followers.

Very likely this has something to do with our struggle to make faith and the Church a priority in our lives. We try to make faith and Church so comfortable, easy, and undemanding that people give it a low priority, and we still burn out our leaders. Perhaps we need to set a higher standard and a more rigorous faith as Oresdes Brownson discovered. It is worth a try.

In Christ,

Rev. Dr. Kenneth E. Knox
Pastor

~ An Invitation ~

The Rev. Dr. Kenneth Knox and the Board of Deacons invite you to experience some of the most beautiful and meaningful services of the Christian experience.

Palm Sunday, March 16, 2008 at 10:00 a.m.

Maundy Thursday, March 20, 2008 at 7:00 p.m.

The Service of Tenebrae (The Service of Shadows)

Good Friday, March 21, 2008, 12 noon to 3:00 p.m. The Church will be open for quiet reflection.

Easter Sunday, March 23, 2008 - Sunrise Service at Hillside Cemetery at 6:45 a.m.

There will be 2 morning worship services at 9:00 and 10:30 a.m at the Church.

In this time of uncertainty, contemplate, reflect, and celebrate the certainty of our Lord, Jesus Christ.



Barbara Niles
March 20th

Jean McPherson
March 26th

Rev. Knox's retirement in April is fast approaching. His last day will be April 30th. We will be honoring Pastor Ken and Jackie with a party here at the church at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 13th. Please plan to join us as we reflect on 23 years of faithful service to our church and community.



If you would like to bless Ken and Jackie with a monetary gift, you can make a check out to the church and mail it to: Lori Stockhaus
36 Linda Avenue
Millbury, MA 01527

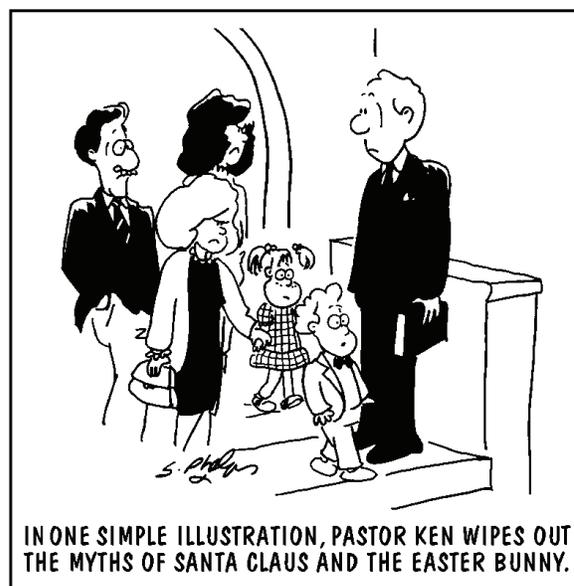
HEIFER INTERNATIONAL

2008 Pancakes at the Farm
March 1st, 8th, 15th & 29th
9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Observe the maple sugaring operation, visit the farm, and enjoy a hearty pancake feed with maple syrup and pork sausage.

Reservations for seating are required.

Please call 508-886-2221 to make reservations. (No email reservations will be accepted.)



IN ONE SIMPLE ILLUSTRATION, PASTOR KEN WIPES OUT THE MYTHS OF SANTA CLAUS AND THE EASTER BUNNY.

One Great Hour of Sharing - What is it?

One Great Hour of Sharing, as part of our Churches' Wider Mission, is the special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that carries God's message of love and hope to people in more than eighty countries, including the United States. The UCC works with international partners to provide sources of clean water and food, education and health care, small business micro -credit, emergency relief, and advocacy and resettlement for refugees and displaced persons. OGHS also supports domestic and international ministries for disaster preparedness and response. More than 60 percent of the UCC's offering supports international development initiatives, including annual support for approximately ten missionaries working in health care, education, and agricultural development. Gifts are also used for disaster preparedness and response, refugee and immigration advocacy and assistance and related volunteer initiatives.

The OGHS special mission offering is received through local UCC congregations and all UCC members are encouraged to participate in this way. Secure online contributions to One Great Hour of Sharing may be made at www.ucc.org/oghs. You will also find offering envelopes included in this month's *Tidings*, which you can complete and mail back to us at 128 Central Street, Auburn, MA 01501. Please note: an offering will be collected during our church services in March. Thank you for your support.

A school with no teachers? Well, almost....

One of the responsibilities of the Board of Christian Ed. is to provide teachers and teachers' aids for our Sunday School students. Yes, I used the words TEACHERS and STUDENTS. Our teachers expect that they are there to teach, and that the youngsters are there to learn. We currently have a scant four regular teachers. Three on rotation for 4th through 6th grades, and one for our 3 through 5 year olds. The current staffing situation forces us to combine Preschool and 1st through 3rd grades and adapt the lesson to try and suit the broader age range. Both the teacher and the student lose in this situation. Our junior high teachers have no students as they have all gone on to Confirmation activities. Our staffing should be:

- 3, 4, and 5 year olds** – One teacher and an aid weekly, currently: Heather Zautner
- 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades** – One teacher and an aid weekly, currently: Heather Zautner
- 4th, 5th, and 6th grades** – One teacher and an aid weekly, currently: Mike Schillinger, Sandi Rhodes, and Sandy Landry
- Junior High** – One teacher and an aid weekly, currently: Rich McPherson and Janice Green

Our **Cradle Roll Program** (toddlers up to 3 year olds) also needs to have two adults covering weekly. Sandi Rhodes and Shirley Hill, among others, have been filling in here as needed.

To be fair to our Sunday School staff, we would like to have enough teachers and aids so that each one gets at least one week to attend Sunday Service monthly. This would require a 3 teacher rotation per grade level. Imagine yourself sacrificing this time in praise and communion with our congregation. This is the situation for some of our teachers.

So, ideally, our Sunday School staff should consist of a minimum of 12 teachers and 3 adults to cover all four grade levels and Cradle Roll. We fall far short of this number.

You, the congregation, are our only resource for meeting this need. During every Baptism at First Congregational Church, we pledge to do our part in the Christian upbringing of the newly Baptized. Volunteering to be a Sunday School teacher or an aid is certainly in keeping with that pledge.

Please feel free to contact any of our teaching staff if you would like to help us out or simply have questions about our Sunday School program. Please help us in our effort to set a good foundation for our youngsters.

The Board of Christian Education: Paula Almstrom, Bruce Fant, Shirley Hill, Ellie Lowell, Sandi Rhodes, Stephanie Rice, Mike Schillinger, Chairman, Leslie Wilson, and Heather Zautner

Coffee Hour Hosts

- 3/2 ~ Stewardship
- 3/9, 3/16 ~ Outreach
- 3/23 ~ Easter Sunday
- 3/30 ~ Trustees
- 4/6 ~ Pranaitis/Hardy Families
- 4/13 ~ Trustees
- 4/20 ~ Music

Our next church supper is planned for
 Saturday, March 15th, at 5:00p.m.
 On the menu: Roast Beef Dinner
 Adults \$8 Children \$4
 Please plan to join us.



March is Red Cross Month, National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, National Kidney Month, National M.S. (Multiple Sclerosis) Education and Awareness Month, and National Nutrition Month.

March 5-11 is National Sleep Awareness Week. The 20th through 26th is National Poison Prevention Week, and the 23rd is American Diabetes Alert Day.

The American Cancer Society sells daffodils, "A Gift of Hope." There is information about this on the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall. The money goes to research, education, advocacy and service to patients.

The closet inside the door to the educational wing continues to change almost daily. Supplies come and go. Please help yourself if you need anything.

We have new cancer diagnoses among us. Please get your check-ups. All of these parishioners have been diagnosed early, and have a good chance. Keep them in your prayers.

God bless!

Deborah Pranaitis, Parish Nurse

Managing through Change.... MISSION: POSSIBLE

This is our stewardship theme for 2008. Throughout the coming year, as we undergo the many changes within First Congregational Church of Auburn - our leadership, the physical changes of our building and also spiritually within ourselves - we have to know that with God all things are possible. We will rise victorious through the many challenges in the months ahead.

We know Jesus as Lord and Savior. We know him as Friend and Companion. Today, let's consider him as a steward, as one who fulfilled his mission as an earthly servant with a heavenly frame of mind.

Toward the end of his physical life, Jesus offered the following prayer to God:

"I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do." (John 17:4)

He meant that his time of servitude on earth was coming to an end. He was referring to his various roles that were meant to show God's hope for humanity. Think of the many facets of Christ's stewardship: He served as teacher, minister, healer, comforter, prophet, and ultimately, as Savior. He had been the consummate steward in that he served God perfectly in every way. Christ revealed the basic essentials of stewardship, which are accepting responsibility from God and using one's time, talent, possessions, and self to serve God and others.

This month's issue of *Stewardship* reviews Christ's own "report" on his stewardship. He gave an account of his stewardship before God at the last judgment. Hopefully, at that time, we can say with Jesus "I have glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do."

Please keep this prayer in your hearts and minds through the upcoming months:

Loving Creator, the challenges before us seem enormous as we strive to serve you. Help us to remember that we can courageously meet every test through Christ our Lord. Amen.

In His Love,

Your Stewardship Committee

Michele Schillinger (Chair), Todd Dube, Mike Dube, Ron Klaucke, and Steve & Sandy Landry



Here We Grow Preschool

As I sit here writing for the March *Tidings*, I am doing it during February vacation. It is hard to think of March when it is the midway mark of February.

Happenings during the month of February: Our final fundraiser, Yankee Candle, was run. I will give you an update on the outcome in April's *Tidings*. We ran it for three weeks in February, giving parents the vacation week to seek out all family relatives. Let's hope they did.

The children and staff celebrated Valentine's Day with parties on the 14th & 15th. Our planned days were the 13th & 14th, but we had another snow day that Wednesday. The children all had the opportunity to be mail carriers during circle time. They had a great time. The parents brought in snacks which, as usual, were yummy.

We have had many new faces and visitors come to *Here We Grow* to check us out for next year. Out of 134 slots we have only 5 left. They are all in the four-year-old classes. We have a very long waiting list for 3's. If you know of anyone looking for a preschool for a child of 4, please send them our way. Many of the visitors remarked how well kept and clean the classrooms, hallways, and vestry are. I'd like to thank Craig Premo, Dave Sampson, and Wayne Prouty for the extra "things" they do to help HWG out. This is something that all who are members of First Congregational Church, or staff of the church, should be very proud of. Parents also remarked on how welcomed they felt while visiting.

Open House went very well with about 65 new visitors. Some were here to check us out for the school year of '09-'10. I have started a list for two years out. WOW!

Looking ahead to March we will be offering Parent Volunteer Month: parents can spend time in their child's classroom as a helper for the day, do science experiments (if they are brave), or read a story at the end of the day. We do have an open door policy throughout the year, but we find that with Parent Volunteer Month, many parents who work will take a day off and come spend it with their child. We enjoy having the extra set of hands to help. Once again Neal Primaeux will be here the first week of March for picture taking. The Auburn Police are scheduled for a day of fingerprinting, which we send home for the parents to keep. As you know, Easter is very early this year, so we will be celebrating Easter with parties in the classroom the week before Holy Week and then it's off for another vacation.

Until next month, stay healthy and safe.

Dawn Murphy, *Here We Grow* Director

Library Tidings
by Gloria Whitehead

Ayaan Herst Ali is a beautiful young woman with amazing courage and a feisty determination to speak the truth in an effort to make the world aware of Islamic ideology and practices. As a result, she's become a controversial political figure whose life is under constant threat by terrorists. As a child, she was living under the Muslim faith in Somalia, Saudi Arabia and Kenya and life became more and more of a nightmare. In her early 20's she became the bride in a forced marriage and sought asylum in the Netherlands. She would never forget the day that she finally reached Holland and was told, "You can stay in Holland for the rest of your life. You are a recognized refugee." This policewoman told her that there was no better status than the A-1 status refugee. Amazed by all of the benefits which accompanied the rating, Ayaan asked, "Why are you doing all this?" The answer, "The authorities have determined that you have a well founded fear of Persecution. It's the law." The next pages are filled with astounding adventures which include our author serving as a member of Parliament in Holland. It's hard to put this book down and when, in the second page of the last chapter you read, "I was no longer Dutch," and it's May 2006, you can't digest those final pages fast enough. You'll be glad that you read this timely book titled *Infidel*.

Joshua - A Parable for Today, Joshua and the Children, and Joshua in the Holy Land are three paperbacks written by Father Joseph F. Girzone who, because of poor health, began his writing career in 1986.

"Sometimes it happens after 2000 years the human race is given another chance." This isn't the story of a biblical figure. Actually, it was Carol Millar who told us what good reading these books provided. Joshua is a quiet and simple man by whom the town people are baffled. Finally, to resolve their quandary, the local church leaders confront Joshua. This deeply moving book has been called "engrossing," "life-changing," "inspiring," "entertaining," and, to top it off, an exercise in spirituality that is appealing.

In the second book, Joshua is in another town whose people are at odds with themselves. The children first notice something unusual about Joshua and it is through them that he works to reform the village as a loving stranger. You, as the reader, can write (mentally) your own description of the role of *Joshua in the Holy Land* in the third of Father Girzone's series.

How about picking up *And God Blessed the Irish - the Story of Patrick* by Chris Driscoll, available in the children's library. Susan Krikorian has done some perky black and white illustrations. This adventurous tale of a boy who was kidnapped, sold as a slave, and escaped is great to tie in with St. Patrick's Day. Just think, he changed the history of Ireland and the world. It's an excellent book to read as a family. It was published in Worcester, MA.

Big
Thank
You!

TO THE BRYN MAWR
SCHOOL COMMUNITY
FOR DONATING TO OUR
FOOD PANTRY 4 LARGE
BOXES FILLED WITH SOUP.

The Sky Family's Fiery Faith & Fiddles

Rollicking Celtic fiddles mixed with Riverdance style Irish step dance and hilarious skits make up this high-energy Celtic Dance and Gospel production. All members of the family perform on several instruments and all contribute to the rich vocal harmonies and lively dance. It's family entertainment at its best! The show will be performed at the First Congregational Church of Millbury on Saturday, March 29th, from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. Tickets are \$12 for adults, \$10 for seniors, \$8 children 7-12, and children 6 and under are free. Refreshments will be served. For more info, please call 508-853-5070 or 508-476-7067 or check out their website at: www.theskys.org

YOUTH ON A MISSION

Youth On a Mission will be offering free samples and taking orders for “Ever -So-Humble” pies during coffee hour on Sunday March 2nd and March 9th. The pies come frozen and ready to bake, and are all natural with no artificial colors, flavors, or preservatives. Truly just like homemade! We will be offering a variety of flavors: apple, blueberry, strawberry rhubarb, pecan, lemon and jumble berry. Delivery will be Sunday, March 16th. These will be the perfect dessert for your Easter dinner!

Some of you may be saying, “Oh my gosh, not another fundraiser!”, but we really need everyone’s help in raising the funds we need to support our activities and our summer mission trip. As of this moment YOM needs to raise approximately \$10,000 for our trip. This year we will be going to Ashville, NC the week of July 19th – July 27th. The \$10,000 includes renting a van, gas (which could be as much as \$3.50 a gallon this summer) hotel, food, building materials, etc.

We cannot do this without everyone’s help. This is an amazing opportunity for our youth. They get so much out of these mission weeks. They see places they might not otherwise see; they learn about different cultures within our own country; they experience one -on-one how it feels to change someone’s life by giving of themselves; they learn about true team work; they are part of powerful worship services that talk about what God expects from us and in return how generous He is; they form friendships and memories that will last a lifetime.

Please also mark your calendars for our annual LIVE auction and luncheon on Sunday April 6th. Our friend, Tate Conkey, will be back to add his professional touch and humor to this annual event. We are ALWAYS looking for donations; please see any YOM member if you have something that might sell at the auction, but most importantly, COME to the auction and bring a family member or friend. This is our biggest fundraiser and we’re hoping to make it a huge success. The Sutton church will not be doing the auction and lunch with us this year, so all proceeds will go directly to YOM.

Thank you for your ongoing support of Youth On a Mission.

God Bless,

Jennifer & Randy Bohn

Remember Our Troops

We have decided to send packages to Iraq at the beginning of every month. So please continue to collect items. Suggestions include dried soup and veggies (no cans), microwavable items in plastic containers, candy, cookies (not homemade as it takes a few weeks to get there) easy mac ‘n cheese, pudding cups that don’t need refrigeration, etc.

If you’d like to help, please see Diane Moore or Avis Britton for more information, and thank you for supporting our troops.

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.

Due to Rev. Knox’s pending retirement, a pastoral search committee will soon be appointed by the Church Council. Anyone interested in serving on this committee (or who thinks that they know of someone who might be a good candidate) should submit their name, or the name of that person, in writing to the Church Council.

Stu Campbell
Council President

Once again we will be accepting orders for Easter plants. Just select your plant and complete the dedication section. 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 decorating our church sanctuary at the same time. Please submit your order form with payment no later than March 16th.

We want to thank Ron and Connie Hanks for organizing this program for us again this year. Please call them with any questions at 508-832-4227 or call the church office at 508-832-2845.

Easter Plant Order Form

Lilies (1 stem) \$10.00 _____

Tulips \$10.00 _____

Color Choice: Yellow _____ Pink _____
Red _____ Orange _____

Hyacinth Blue _____ **\$10.00**

Dedication: (PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)

From: _____

In Memory of _____

In Celebration of _____

Other sentiment: _____

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Please submit your order form no later than March 16th. (Remember to order early for best selection.) Please complete one form for each plant ordered. Additional forms are available in Fellowship Hall. If you have any questions, call Connie or Ron Hanks at 508-832-4227 or the church office at 508-832-2845.



News from Outreach

The Outreach Committee has calendars and ark banks available (in Fellowship Hall) to help raise money to buy chicks and bunnies for Easter. This is through the Heifer Project. Our overall goal is to build an ark with a pair of several different kinds of animals. The chicks and bunnies are the first of these purchases over the next few years. The chicks, after six months, can lay up to 200 eggs a year. The extra eggs can be sold to pay for school, clothes and medicine. Rabbits have as many as 40 offspring in a year. They provide families with a steady source of protein and income. Rabbit manure can be applied to the gardens to make them produce more crops or vegetables. The calendars cover a 4 week period, so we would like them back by Easter, March 23, 2008.

Thank you.

Debbie Pranaitis, Outreach Chairman



Daylight Saving Time begins March 9th - so, remember to turn your clocks ahead before retiring on Saturday night, March 8th.

Calling All Confirmands

We would like to recognize all confirmands who were confirmed by Rev. Knox (1985-2008) at the 10:00 a.m. Service of Confirmation on Sunday, April 13th. All confirmands are invited to be present and participate. Family members and friends, please pass this information on. (Ages would be approximately 15 years old to 38 years old.)

I recently came across an article in the *U.C.C. News* of 2001 which I had saved. You might be interested. In 2001, there were 855 ordained U.C.C. clergy in Massachusetts including active and retired ministers. Of these, 18% were 45 years old or younger, 55% were between 46 and 65, and 27% were over 65 years old. Now, six years later, the number of U.C.C. active clergy has decreased by 341 persons and the U.C.C. retirees has increased by 234.

When I was attending Andover-Newton (1963-1969), the enrollment was burgeoning (74% increase from 1956-1963). Now it is not. The average age of students is 40 years old. The average debt load of a U.C.C. seminary graduate is \$28,072. The world of U.C.C. entry level clergy has totally changed. None of our old assumptions reflect reality. I can't imagine the stresses upon new clergy entering ministry. It will be important to listen carefully to the Massachusetts Conference information about clergy. I am in a bit of shock just writing this.

However, God will find a way to guide the right person to you. Pray, and pray for openness to that process.

In Christ,

Rev. Dr. Kenneth E. Knox, Pastor

THE POWER OF MUSIC

For this issue, I have compiled quotes from a variety of sources on the power music has in luring us closer to God, to humanity, and to ourselves.

Music lifts us away from ego, and takes us above earthly concerns.

Music is the most abstract and sublime of all the arts, capable of transmitting an unbelievable amount of expressive, historical, and philosophical information to us.

The skills one develops just listening to music - imagination, abstract thinking, intuition, allow us to transcend our own world and partake in utterly different realities.

As a universal language, music allows us to tap into the social, cultural, and aesthetic traditions of different cultures. We become more aware of our shared humanity and the vision of others.

Musical creativity has proved a vibrant means of expression for spiritual and intellectual forces throughout the history of civilization.

Music is one way to raise your energy, as music itself emits vibrations. (This is why you feel a change of mood with different songs.)

Music pulls us away from our ego mind and quiets the disruptive voice that brings us into negative thought patterns.

“The life of the arts - far from being an interruption, a distraction, in the life of a nation, is close to the center of a nation’s purpose - and is the test of quality of a nation’s civilization.”

- John F. Kennedy

Dear God, we join our brother, St. Francis of Assisi, and ask that we might be instruments of your peace. Through our singing, soothe the hearts of your people toward rest. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

Blessings,

Heather Moore
Minister of Music

Sources: *Observing the Rests* by Terry W. York
Professor Robert Greenberg, PhD, Berkeley, California
P. Sinclair, Healer and Minister

On March 9th, The First Church Choir will present *The Passion Story*, the story of Jesus' crucifixion told in song. Five anthems will take us through:

- Who Is Jesus*
- The Olive Garden*
- Come, Kneel at the Cross*
- Tears Slowly Fall*
- And, He Died*

The joyful news of Jesus' resurrection will be sung on Easter with *Glorify the Name*. Also, on Easter, Joyful Noyse will join the adults with the anthem, *May You Have Peace* and a guest instrumentalist will be joining us for both services.

Coming up: The Praise Team will be presenting another "Praise and Worship" time during coffee hour. The tentative date is March 30th. All are welcome to sing!

JOYFUL NOYSE REHEARSAL SCHEDULE:

March 2, 9 & 16	11:15 a.m.
March 23	(Easter Sunday) <i>May You Have Peace</i>
March 30	11:15 a.m.
April 6, 13 & 20	11:15 a.m.
April 27	9:15 a.m. <i>Daniel and the Lion</i>
May 4, 11, 18 & 25	11:15 a.m.
June 1	9:15 a.m. Joyful Noyse Recognition (anthem to be announced)



Join us for Sunday morning worship service at 10:00 a.m.

Lenten Services:

The Passion Story (the story of Jesus' crucifixion told in song) will be presented on March 9th at the 10 a.m. Service

Palm Sunday is March 16th ~ 10 a.m. Worship Service

Maundy Thursday is March 20th ~ 7 p.m. Service

Good Friday is March 21st ~ Our Church Sanctuary will be open from 12 noon until 3 p.m. for meditation

Easter Sunday is March 23rd ~ with our Sunrise Service at 6:45 a.m. at Hillside Cemetery and two worship services - 9:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. at the church

~ All Are Welcome ~

TIDINGS is a monthly publication of

First Congregational Church
128 Central St.
Auburn MA 01501

Phone: (508)832-2845

Web: auburnfirstucc.org



BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
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Auburn, Mass

March 2008						
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