



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

FROM OUR INTERIM PASTOR

As you may know, I spent my high school years living in South Florida. A while ago, I was browsing through Zillow and found myself looking at a condo in the area where I lived. One thing led to another and now several times a week I get an email from Zillow inviting me to look at another condo. This may never stop – south Florida has zillions of condos; small ones, huge ones, single story, townhouse – you name it and you can find it there.

Most of the condos I see fall into one of two categories: if they were built before 1970, they are usually no more than three stories, there are no interior corridors, a common laundry room, and the balcony/screened in room faces on a corridor. After 1970, more and more of the condos are in much taller buildings, have interior corridors, personal laundry facilities, and the balconies or screened in rooms do not face a corridor.

It is a lot harder to get to know your neighbors in the newer buildings. You don't meet people while you're doing laundry; you rarely see people walking down the corridors and so on. But in those old buildings, it is almost impossible not to get to know one another. Folks sit out in their screened room, drinking coffee and the neighbors walk by, or you visit in the laundry room, and so on.

That's just one way in which our world has changed over the last fifty or sixty years, but it's an important sign. It's much harder today to create and sustain community, not just in south Florida condos, but all around – including right here in our town. A town without solid community is a place filled with loneliness, and it is never healthy for everyone to live isolated from one another.

It's quite possible that the single most important thing in building a good, safe, friendly town is creating, supporting and maintaining a sense of community. Churches have an important part in that work. We are one of the few organizations in a town that talks about goodness, right-ness, justice, help, and love on a regular basis. We are a place where everyone is welcome, where new people are welcomed. At our best, we are one of the prime creators of community in our area.

Social scientists report that organizations which depend on bringing people together are struggling; folks have a diminished interest in participating. Most of the books I've read on this say that people have just lost interest, but now I'm wondering if this isn't also because when we build housing in ways that make it difficult for neighbors to see and talk with one another, we forget how important it is to do so. We used to have, say, four foot wire fences between yards; now, often, we have six foot stockade fencing. Six foot fences slow the deer down, but make it really hard to talk over the fence.

Are there fences in our lives that keep us apart from our neighbors? Are there invisible fences around our church which keep people from stepping in our doors? We know that welcoming new people and making them a part of our church is important for us, but did we realize that having a strong, vibrant church is important for the health of Auburn as well?

Let's think this month about ways in which we can help build community and tear down the walls that divide us.

Blessings,
Pastor Virginia



Bob & Carole Murray will be celebrating their anniversary on May 4th.
Paul & Diane Moore will be celebrating their special day on May 10th.
Stan & Sue MacPhee will be celebrating their anniversary on May 21st.
Happy Anniversary, Bob & Carole, Paul & Diane & Stan & Sue!

Coffee Hour Hosts

- 5/5 **Volunteer Needed***
5/12 **Volunteers Needed***
5/19 Board of Trustees & Prudential Committee
5/26 Board of Deacons
- * If you would like to help with coffee hour, please see the sign-up sheet in fellowship hall.**

BETHEL CENTENNIAL MUSICAL CELEBRATION

MAY 18 at 4:00 PM

Featuring past and present
Music Directors & Choirs
Reception to follow in
Voosen Hall

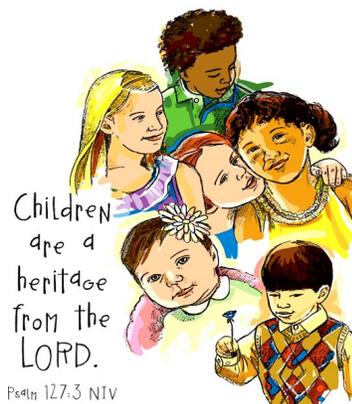


Bethel Campus of Grace Lutheran
90 Bryn Mawr Ave., Auburn

freewill offering

Please mark your calendars for **Sunday, June 9th**, and plan to join us as we celebrate our children on

CHILDREN'S SUNDAY!



Following our service that day we will be having our annual picnic. We will be looking for donations of desserts and salads to complement the burgers and dogs supplied by the Board of Ed. Please look for a sign-up sheet in fellowship hall as the date approaches.

A huge THANK YOU to everyone who supported the Pansies for Progress fundraiser to further Pancreatic Cancer Research. Donations and pansy purchases, from First Congregational Church Auburn alone, amounted to nearly \$2,000. (The campaign's total fundraising effort has not been announced yet.)

I can't thank you enough for your help with this cause that has impacted my family and so many others.

Pamela Tentor

CALLING ALL SOON TO BE GRADUATES . . .



If you are aware of any students with ties to First Congregational who will be graduating this spring, please email Denise at: secretary@auburnfirstucc.org or call the Church office, (508) 832-2845. Please include where they're graduating from and when, degree they will be receiving, details of their future plans, and list family members (parents/grandparents) who are known within the church. We plan to acknowledge our graduates in the June *Tidings* and a future bulletin.

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The last few Sundays, Michele and I have been teaching the Sunday School children some of Jesus' parables. The three that we have been focusing on are: the Parable of the Mustard Seed, the Parable of the Sower and the Parable of the Good Samaritan. A student from my class asked, "Why does Jesus teach through parables, when he is already preaching about the same thing in the temples and in the streets?"

I love it when the students ask good questions!!! To be honest, I do not have a fancy theological education. I must research and learn each week, before every class I lead. But I have seen and experienced, the work of God in real life. The lessons that we learn from Jesus are sewn into the fabric of the lives we make for ourselves. As a mother, I have had the privilege (and challenge) to see those same lessons sewn into the lives of my children. So when a student asks me a question such as this one, my answer is based on how I have lived it personally.

Here is my answer: If you think of Jesus as the teacher and all of us his students, you can understand that our job is to learn. Jesus, so many years ago, recognized that his students all learn differently. With different education levels and different neurodevelopment, we learn at a different pace and comprehend things better when a topic is presented differently to us, than our peers. Jesus is the greatest example of a teacher. He made sure that every single person had the opportunity to hear and learn and follow the rules of God. Jesus preached, he broke bread, he told stories with deep meaning and he led by example! He taught the same lessons over and over again, using different vehicles for understanding. The parables that Jesus taught are relevant even today. We should follow Jesus' example and use all the tools, including the parables, at our disposal to teach children about God and what our responsibilities are as Christians.

Having the privilege to teach the children of our community has offered me a bit of awareness that the Holy Spirit lives inside me. I have the guidance of Jesus, the greatest teacher of all time, to reach as many children as is possible.

John 14:26 ESV "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."

* * * * *

Thank you to everyone who donated diapers, wipes and feminine hygiene products for WAMS (Worcester Area Mission Society). You are all so generous.

Thank you for all the support throughout the year.

Shannon Hartmann, Director of Religious Education

Church World Service (CWS) Blankets Program

When difficult times happen, a kind and loving response can make all the difference. That's why the CWS Blankets Program was created—to give a kind, loving and tangible response to someone facing a difficult time, reminding them that they are not alone. Through the generosity of CWS partner organizations, congregations and individual supporters, our most vulnerable neighbors around the world can feel safe and keep warm with fresh linens and clean sleeping quarters. When our neighbors are in need, even \$10 for a single blanket goes a long way. If you would like to make a donation, checks should be payable to the church (First Congregational Church) with "CWS Blankets" in the memo section and may be placed in the offering plate on Sundays or mailed directly to the church at 128 Central St., Auburn, MA 01501. CWS offering envelopes are included in this month's *Tidings*. Cards are available in fellowship hall if you would like to make a donation in honor of a family member.

First Congregational Church in Auburn

\$40 All Supplies Included

Cash, Check, or
Venmo @Lori-Ann-Stockhaus

Women's Fellowship Hosts
Paint Night
May 17, 2024
7-9PM

128 Cental Street
Auburn, MA

RSVP By 5/10
Paula @ 774-534-0565

**Artist Jayne Sarkisian
Guides You
Through the
Painting
Process**

Eagle Scout Project to Benefit Our Church

Nathan Minor, a Life Scout with Troop 53 in Auburn, has picked our church as the beneficiary of his Eagle Scout project: to update the pumpkin patch shelving with added activities for our largest church fundraiser. Nathan is here most Sundays, so please approach him if you would like to learn more details about this project. Any donations toward the cost of the project would be greatly appreciated and can be made in cash, check or through Venmo. Nathan is looking forward to leading the scouts to deliver this project in September 2024.



We are pleased to announce the birth of Lily James Mullin who was born April 10th, weighing 7 lb., 5 oz. and measuring 19½ inches long. Lily is the daughter of Kasey and James Mullin. Proud grandparents are Donna and Todd Dube and great-grandparents Judy Murphy and Mike and Cindy Dube.



May is Arthritis Awareness Month, Better Hearing and Speech Month, Lupus Awareness Month, and Mental Health Awareness Month. It's also National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month, National High Blood Pressure Education Month, National Stroke Awareness Month, Skin Cancer Prevention and Awareness Month, and Healthy Vision Month.

This is a reminder to get these health issues taken care of before something happens. Please use sunscreen. Get any moles checked. Make the appointments that you might have been putting off! I'm trying to practice what I preach!

God Bless!

Deb Pranaitis

Parish Nurse

cell # 508-612-4521

FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

The Windows in Fellowship Hall, along with the Education wing, are in poor condition and the Trustees would like to replace them this summer. We are looking for financial help with this project. Here We Grow Preschool is paying to have all the windows on the first floor replaced. We cannot thank them enough for this generous gift to our Church.

The cost per window is \$800.00 which includes installation. We are asking for donations towards the windows on the second floor, which includes Fellowship Hall. Let's get creative!! You can donate to buy one window or more. You can get together with another family or two and donate a window, or you can make a donation to the church towards the purchase of the windows.

We would like to have donations into the church by the beginning of June so that we can be ready for installation when the preschool is done for the summer and the weather is in our favor.

We will be honoring the donations either with the names of the donors on a plaque or at each window, which we have not yet decided.

Thank you in advance for your support.

When separating perennials in your gardens, please keep the June 8th **PLANT SALE** in mind and pot up a few to donate. The plants are a huge part of the church's profits! Please be sure to LABEL each pot with the plant name. We're hoping this will eliminate any "mystery" plants. A big seller is RHUBARB! . . . cut and bundle in 6 stalks. Also, please remember to support Christine on Whittemore St., directly across from Leicester High School. She donates lots of plants to our sale every year. Her house is about a 1/4 mile from Route 56; her greenhouses are on the left, next to a blue cape house. Parking is across the street.





Here We Grow Preschool

It doesn't seem possible that it is already May and we are entering the last full month of our school year. It feels like we were just greeting a new group of children and staff.

As we begin to look to next year, we will need one part-time teacher for 2 mornings a week, perfect for someone looking to get back into working or just getting started. College students welcome, we will work with the right candidate. We always have a need for subs as well, no experience necessary.

As the last full month of our school year begins, I wanted to share some of our favorite activities that get the kids up and moving, especially on these cool, rainy, spring days. Building an obstacle course, either indoors or outside, is a lot of fun and simple to do using everyday items. Dancing, just put on any music and get grooving, or play the freeze dance by randomly stopping the music and striking a pose. To practice shape/letter/number recognition, write numbers/letters or draw shapes on the driveway and hop from one to another and call out the name of what you land on.

Some other less active activities that we love, Playdoh! It is so great for increasing finger/hand strength as well as their imagination. Add some child-safe scissors to the Playdoh and practice cutting. Getting a lot of junk mail? Let your littles help rip it up. Show them how to use their pointer and thumb to grab the top of the paper and tear, such a huge lesson to learn, especially when it comes to opening juice box straws. I love using washable markers on my windows, or sliding glass door; we play tic-tac-toe to practice letter/number formation or just draw pictures, and it's so easy to clean the markers off the glass. And always Read, Read, Read, there is nothing better.

We still have openings for the 2024-25 school year if you know of anyone looking for a great preschool experience, please send them our way.

We will begin collecting linens for our final clothing drive of the school year on May 19. Once again, we can take clothes, shoes, belts, purses, sheets, blankets, curtains, etc., as well as books. Please put all linen items in bags and all books in boxes. The last day for donations will be May 30.

Happy Mother's Day and, as always, thank you for your continued support of Here We Grow, stay safe and healthy.

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



Please plan to join us on

**Confirmation Sunday,
June 2, 2024.**

Our service will begin as usual at 10 a.m. Please come and support our newest church members.

FROM THE BOARD OF CHRISTIAN OUTREACH

We are still accepting donations for El Buen Samaritano (The Good Samaritan). They accept donations of non-perishable food items (check the dates), gently used clothing for all age groups, and toys. The big black and red plaid box is back in fellowship hall for donations. Some of the items they could use, and don't always get, is baby formula and pet food.

They are also grateful for volunteers. Food distribution is every Friday between 10am-12:30pm.

The phone number, if you would like to volunteer or have questions, is 774-253-1619.

Papa Gino's

PIZZERIA



Here We Grow Preschool

will earn 20% of all qualifying sales
from orders placed on May 23rd.



Thursday, May 23, 2024

4:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Auburn • 459 Southbridge Street • 508-832-6583

- **Walk-in or phone orders:** Mention this fundraiser when you place your order for the organization to get credit for your order.
- **Online orders:** Enter code 19 at the payment screen and then click redeem.
- **Fundraiser orders** are only valid with regular priced menu items and cannot be paired with coupons or deals. Fundraisers are not valid on third party orders.



Valid for all Dine-In, Carry Out,
Online & Delivery orders!

View menu & place online orders @ papaginos.com

COMMUNITY YARD SALE & PLANT SALE SATURDAY, JUNE 8th, 8 A.M. till 1 P.M.



Mark your calendars for our **Community Yard Sale on June 8th** and begin setting aside items. As we've done in the past, we will rent spaces and tables, plus we'll do all the advertising, and remember, our prime location can't be beat! Sort those items now and prepare to turn that "trash" into "treasure." Spaces are \$20 for church members, \$25 for non-members. Use of a table is \$5 per table. Please contact Denise in the church office, 508-832-2845 to secure your spot. **SPACES ARE FILLING UP FAST, SO DON'T DELAY!**

WE NEED YOUR HELP TO MAKE THIS EVENT A SUCCESS! You can carry out tables and chairs on Friday night (the 7th), help serve and clean refreshment tables, help clean-up and return tables inside at the end of the day on Saturday. **Please see the volunteer sign-up sheets, which list specific tasks and timeslots, located on the table in fellowship hall.**

YOU MAY ALSO SHOW YOUR SUPPORT by donating perennials, renting a yard sale space, shopping at the yard sale, and joining us for hamburgers and hot dogs. Remember to invite lots of friends and family to join you in all the fun!

***** PLEASE NOTE** that we will **NOT** be having a church table at the yard sale this year.

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 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Email: secretary@auburnfirstucc.org

or InterimPastor@auburnfirstucc.org

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

Web: auburnfirstucc.org



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OR CURRENT RESIDENT