



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 THE PASTOR: In-person Worship and Congregational Meeting

We are looking to start in-person worship beginning Sunday, September 13. We have hand sanitizer, masks, and will not have congregational singing, as singing is said to be a good way to spread COVID. We also have a plan to socially distance in the sanctuary. As is written in the Massachusetts guidelines, “Attendees who are not part of the same immediate household must be seated at least 6 feet apart. Members of the same immediate household are permitted to sit together and less than 6 feet apart.”

I imagine that household means bubble; if people are in the same bubble, they may sit together. We ask that you keep your mask on while inside the building. People will be asked to sit in a checkerboard pattern. So we have 6 feet of distance between each group.

We will also have speakers pointed out the window toward the front lawn for people who feel more comfortable worshipping in their car or on the lawn. We will be recording and live streaming the worship services and still having Zoom prayer time on Sunday. (If you are not currently receiving Zoom access info, and would like to, please contact the church office at secretary@auburnfirstucc.org or by phone at 508-832-2845.)

Shortly before the quarantine started, the boiler that heated the sanctuary broke. After a lot of work, the trustees are presenting a plan for a new, more efficient, heating system. The new boilers will run on propane. The heating system in most of the church will remain the same. The plan is to take out the large steam radiators in the sanctuary and replace them with a hot water system that will heat quicker and more efficiently. Currently it can take two hours to heat the sanctuary from the time the thermostat is turned up. As you can imagine, making steam uses A LOT of energy, and heating giant iron radiators is not a quick way to heat a room. You may find more details on the boiler plans elsewhere in the *Tidings*.

The congregation needs to meet and vote on the plan, and the raising of the money to pay for it. So, after church on September 13, we will have a congregational meeting. We will have it in the sanctuary, with audio also carried on the speakers facing out onto the front lawn, and on Zoom for those who do not feel comfortable attending church in person. This is the first time trying a hybrid congregational meeting; please be patient as I am sure there will be technical difficulties.

We live in a stressful time. We need to think about everything we do. We ask, “Is this safe? Can we make it safer? Is this activity worth the risk?”

We all will have different answers as to what activities we will or won't do. Please do what you feel comfortable doing. If you have questions, please email or call the office, 508-832-2845, and we will try to answer them.

God bless us all.

Pastor Brian

SEPTEMBER SERMON TITLES

- 9/6 “The Beginning of the Year and the Beginning of the Jewish People” (*online*)
- 9/13 “God Is Surprised Again” (*in-person service begins*)
- 9/20 “Do We Complain Like the Israelites?”
- 9/27 “Are We in the Wilderness of Sin”

PLEASE NOTE:

Due to concerns about COVID-19, a joint decision was made to cancel the pumpkin delivery this year.

Also, since no one has volunteered to run this year's yard sale, we won't be holding the community yard sale.

September Birthdays include:

Pastor Brian - Sept. 6th

Jacob McPherson - Sept. 14th

Beverly Geddes - Sept. 25th

**Happy Birthday,
P.B., Jake, and Bev!**



On September 14th
Lori & Nick Stockhaus will
be celebrating their 29th
wedding anniversary.

Congratulations!

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the following baptisms were held privately.

On June 14, we celebrated the baptism of Kevin George McDonald. Kevin is the 1-year-old son of Craig and Julie (Cove) McDonald. Kevin's grandparents are Lisa and Eric Cove, and his great-grandparents are Lois and Russell Therrien.

On June 27, we celebrated the baptism of Mason Robert Sparling, the 8-month-old son of Jonathan and Lisa Sparling.

We pray for God's continued blessing on these little ones and their families.

AN IMPORTANT UPDATE FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board of Trustees wants to inform the church of a necessary and unavoidable capital improvement that we have undertaken. We have decided, after many years of repairs and band-aids, that it is time to retire our heating boilers. The reason that now is the time is because the main boiler for the sanctuary is defunct and, even with prayer, cannot be resurrected. Due to its age and years of constant maintenance, we feel it would be a good time to replace the second boiler as well. It will be far less expensive to do these projects together as opposed to paying for the labor twice. Both boilers would be replaced with high efficiency LP gas, forced hot water units. In order to change the sanctuary system, and be more efficient and less costly to maintain, it will mean removing all the old steam piping and radiators and replacing them with a combination of commercial fin tube radiation and fan coil units. This will also give us better control over our energy costs and comfort. We chose an LP system with boilers that can be converted to natural gas in the future if gas lines are laid.

We have already committed \$11,000 to the engineering of this system by Seaman Engineering Corp., which is complete. To remove the existing boilers and radiators, we have a quote of \$5,500 to remove the boilers and pipe plus \$25 per radiator. Expected cost of our oil tank removal is \$4,500, as long as we do not have an oil leak. To install an LP tank will cost roughly \$4,750. We already tested for asbestos at a cost of \$625. So far we have spent \$11,625 in initial cost, and this was taken out of the boiler budget the Trustees had previously set up.

At this time, the Board of Trustees has submitted a warrant for approval to loan invested funds to pay for the project up front, and engage in a capital campaign to replace these funds. The Deacons have also approved a request to provide up to 1/3 of the cost of the project using funds from the Pearl Morrill invested funds. We have requested a special meeting to be held on September 13th after the service. A copy of the warrant for the special meeting is included in this month's *Tidings*.

A NOTE OF



Linda and I would like to thank our wonderful church family for all the love and support shown to us since the passing of our mother, Phyllis Hardy, on May 12th. It's difficult enough to lose a loved one, but during this time with lockdown and social distancing, it's been very difficult. We're so grateful to have your love and support, and we do feel it. Thank you. We love you.

Sincerely, Debbie Pranaitis and Linda Hardy

Here We Grow Preschool

Welcome to the 31st year of **Here We Grow** Preschool being an educational outreach program of the First Congregational Church in Auburn. I am excited for the start of another great school year.

As most of you know, Mrs. Michele Fuller, a long time HWG teacher/parent/supporter had taken last year off to battle cancer. Sadly, she lost that fight over the summer. Please join me in extending prayers for her husband and two sons.

In March, we had to abruptly shut our doors by order of the governor due to the Covid-19 virus. This caused a lot of chaos and turmoil for many people. Our students struggled with trying to understand why they suddenly could not see their friends and teachers, and our teachers missed their students. Classrooms were left in disarray, and everyone was left wondering what would happen. I am so grateful to our staff for all their hard work and patience; through all of it we managed to stay in touch with families through social media and were able to host a "drive-through" goodbye day in the spring. We had staff here over the summer cleaning up the rooms to get ready for a new year.

On September 8, 2020, our doors will open as we welcome our children and families for another great year of meeting and making new friends, and exploring and learning in a beautiful environment. Things are looking a bit different this year for all of us due to the Covid-19 virus. The number of children we can serve has been reduced so that we can ensure safe physical distancing with the children. Children and staff will have to wear masks, and we will not be able to have families come into the school; which makes us sad, since we love having the parents come in to help. We are unable to go on field trips and we are not yet sure if/how we will be able to celebrate the holidays.

We had a few staffing changes for this year, as many of our staff also have young children at home who are going to be doing most of their school work remotely. So, here is our 2020 staff: Room 1 - Michelle Lempicki, Room 2 - Helen Ethier, Room 3 - Anne Coyne, and Room 4 - Mariann Lavallee. I know these ladies are going to keep HWG the best preschool we can be.

Thanks for all the help we received to get ready for the new school year. A big thank you to Mike Schilinger for all the help he gives HWG and the great job he did preparing the vestry and classroom floors, and Wayne Prouty for cleaning up the playground for us; things are looking great.

So, off we go to another school year with many new faces, many returning faces, and the hope that we can provide a bit of peace and "normalcy" to the children and families we serve.

Until next month, enjoy the weather and stay safe —

Cristi Corey, **Here We Grow** Director

To the Members of the First Congregational Church of Auburn, Massachusetts,

You are hereby notified and called upon to be present in person or on Zoom for a Special Meeting of the church on Sunday, September 13, 2020 immediately following the worship service. You can join the Zoom meeting by computer or phone call. Those using Zoom should remain connected following the service, or connect by 10:30 AM to the same Zoom meeting as the worship service. The Special Meeting will start at 10:35 AM. A quorum of 40 members is required.

If a quorum is not available on Sunday, a Zoom meeting will be scheduled for Monday, September 14, at 7:00 PM to hold the Special Meeting.

It is both a duty and a privilege of each member of the church to make him or herself available to transact the business of the church.

WARRANT ARTICLE

Article I To see if the church will vote to approve the terms and conditions for borrowing money from Invested Funds. Funds to be used toward the conversion for the current heating system from steam to forced hot water, at 128 Central Street, Auburn, Massachusetts, as outlined by the Board of Trustees.

***Note:** Zoom access information is provided weekly through the church's email distribution list. The access information may also be obtained by calling the church office, 508-832-2845, Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

FROM OUR SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS:

*Dear First Congregational Church
Memorial/Scholarship Committee,*

Thank you for giving me the resources to propel me through college. As a recipient of the Jay E. Murray Scholarship, I wanted to say I am truly grateful for the opportunity. Thanks to your graciousness, I will be able to attend the University of San Diego in the fall, my books will not have to be a stressful purchase, and my undergrad grades will be my main concern. Thank you again!

*God bless,
Avery Pellegrino*

Dear Scholarship Committee,

Thank you so much for the Jay E. Murray Scholarship. I am honored to receive it. This will help cover the cost of my college expenses.

*Sincerely,
Emma Sullivan*

AUBURN WALK FOR HUNGER

Last year our walk was impacted by the hurricane, and we held it inside the gym at North American Martyrs. This year we will unfortunately cancel the walk due to the pandemic. The need for donations to Auburn Youth and Family Services' and North American Martyrs' food pantries continues. Our church members have been very generous over many years. For those of you who would like to continue giving, please make checks out to Auburn Youth and Family Services and mail to 21 Pheasant Ct., Auburn, MA 01501. If you have any questions about this annual October fundraiser, please contact Sue Campbell, 508-799-2718. Thanks so much for your support of the many families that count on food provided by these pantries.



I hope you are all safe and well. It's normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared, or angry during this pandemic. Talking to people you trust can help. You should try to maintain a healthy lifestyle as best as you can with proper diet, adequate sleep and exercise, and social interaction with loved ones at home or online. Seek professional help for physical and mental health needs instead of using smoking, alcohol, or drugs to cope.

We've been having a social gathering on the front lawn of the church on Thursdays at 1 p.m. Everyone brings a lawn chair and we visit for about an hour. It's just social, but there's been good feedback about being with church family.

I still have medical equipment in the closet and it's been there since before COVID-19, so it's not contaminated. I deliver, if need be, but call me if you need anything, 508-612-4521.

I have arranged for a **Flu Shot Clinic** with the pharmacist from Auburn Pharmacy. He will be here on Sunday, September 27th, and Sunday, October 4th, at 11 a.m. on the church lawn. I have forms to fill out beforehand, or contact Denise at the church and she will email you a copy of the form. Please be sure to let me know ahead of time so I can give the pharmacist a count. Shingles shots can be given as well, but they need to be registered ahead of time. Call me with any questions, 508-612-4521.

Please stay safe and healthy! God Bless!

Debbie Pranaitis, Parish Nurse, 508-612-4521

FROM OUR DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

WOW, what a summer! There are times in our lives when we are tested, and our faith is strengthened through prayer.

During the summer, the kids and I have met once or twice per month just to keep connected and enjoy each other's company. We had chalk parties and decorated the parking lot. I also read biblically based stories online that the children could watch at their leisure.

Due to guidelines put out by Mass.Gov., "Any childcare services shall remain closed until such time that there is additional guidance," we will not be having Sunday school as we have in the past. The Board of Education and I met this summer and have decided that the focus this fall should be to reconnect with the children and for them to keep in touch with their church friends. So, once or twice a month, we will have "lawn time." During this time, we will play church-based music for a dance party as well as activities and crafts that can safely be conducted.

This is a work in progress, so any ideas/suggestions will be welcomed. Our need for social distancing will mean that we will need lawn monitors to keep the children safe. As of now, our schedule appears to be after service; so if you could volunteer to stay out and watch the kids around the perimeter of the lawn, that would be wonderful! All of this is subject to change and, as I said, this is a work in progress. I will keep you all informed as we solidify the program. For now, I cannot wait to see you all in service with your family! The first day we will have a dance party will be Rally Day on September 13. We will also tie dye a mask on this day. Please e-mail me (crazyclan6@live.com) if you are coming, so I have enough masks.

Youth On a Mission

Unfortunately, we had to cancel all of our spring/summer events. We have a lot of new kids joining YOM this year, so we would like to have a meeting after the worship service on Rally Day, September 13. During this meeting, we can discuss any upcoming events/meetings.

I am pleased/sadden that Lillian will be stepping down as a leader for YOM. Lillian has accepted a job with the Quincy Public Schools and will be moving to Boston. Since Lillian is leaving, we will need someone to assume the role of YOM leader. Please think about this and let me know if anyone, or a few of you, would be interested.

After the meeting on the 13th, we are going to have the kids all tie dye a mask for school/home. Please e-mail me at crazyclan6@live.com if you plan to attend, so we may be sure that we have enough masks for everyone to make one.

If you are new to YOM, please forward me your email address at crazyclan6@live.com so I can add you to the group e-mails.

I can't wait to hear all about your adventures these past 6 months! I pray you all stay well, and we will see you September 13 on the lawn.

Jean McPherson, MEd/Director of Religious Education



FROM THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee has received a few resignations during the summer months.

Pat Bukoski, Clerk Officer: For many years, Pat has been our Church Clerk and has now resigned with Council's approval on 8/27/2020. Pat's dedication to this church has been monumental in securing the church's history of records of which she diligently documented. There is a need to fill this position as soon as possible. The By-Laws of FCC to fulfill this position state:

"SECTION 3 The Clerk shall take the minutes and keep the records of the Business Meeting of the Church, and the Church Council. The Clerk, with the assistance of the Church Secretary, shall keep a record with addresses of the members of the Church, dates and modes of their reception and removal, and a record of Baptisms, marriages, and deaths. The Clerk shall issue letters of transfer voted by the Church Council, preserve on file written official reports, give notice of all meetings when necessary, prepare all correspondence not otherwise provided for, and perform other duties as needed to facilitate maintaining the records of the Church."

Lillian McPherson, from the Board of Education (BOE), has also resigned with Council's approval on 8/27/2020. While there will be no Sunday Church School (for now), the BOE has been meeting to brainstorm ideas that will keep our church's youth focused on their Christian Education in new ways.

Please contact your Nominating Committee if interested in these or another Committee:
Sue MacPhee (508) 832-9347, Judi Taft (508) 341-4530, or Sheila Skog (978) 387-7705

FROM THE BOARD OF DEACONS

Sunday “In-Church” Services will begin on September 13th.

During Covid-19, the opening of our church doors for Sunday morning service has been a difficult decision, but we now leave the decision of attendance up to each individual. Our first weekly in-person Sunday service will be on September 13, 2020, at 10:00 AM, in the sanctuary. For those that wish to hear the service from outside on the front lawn, or possibly their car, a speaker system will be projecting live via our front sanctuary windows. To reach those that wish to attend from the safety of their home, Sunday services will also be available online. Please look for additional online service information to come via email or call the church office, 508-832-2845.

Below is the list of guidelines that were collectively taken from the required MA Safety Standards and our church committees in order to meet safety compliances within the building. For everyone’s safety and for the safety of staying open, we prayerfully ask that these guidelines be adhered to.

Only one outside entrance will be available for access and will display the Covid-19 rules of entry. Entrance will only be through the front sanctuary door or, if needed, the “sanctuary” elevator. ALL other FCC doors should remain locked. Signage will be posted not to enter at those doors (per MA Safety Standards).

Sanitizers will be located for entry and exit purposes.

Masks - Per the MA Safety Standards: "All attendees and staff must wear face coverings or masks in accordance with COVID-19 Order No. 31 and the Department of Public Health's Guidance while inside and while entering and exiting places of worship or otherwise participating in in-person services, except where a person is unable to wear a face covering or mask because of a medical or disabling condition." (*Masks will be available if not brought.*)

Collection plates will be located at the entrance in the sanctuary (instead of being passed among the pews during service).

Bulletins will not be provided; instead, an electronic Sunday service bulletin will be posted on the FCC Facebook site as well as via an email.

Once inside the building, attendees are asked to go directly to a pew and not gather to socialize. All available (spaced) pews will be clearly marked with a bow and contain a Bible within those designated seating areas. Because no singing is allowed, there will be no hymnals. Music will be offered by our organist and, at times, special accompaniments.

Notification for any prayer requests may be submitted to the church office prior to the Sunday Service. Prayer slips will not be collected during the service at this time.

Exiting the sanctuary should be direct, using the same outside route as was the entry inside (toward sanctuary doors/elevator). Per Mandatory Safety Standards, coffee hour at this time is not allowed. Note: there is access to the restrooms; however, not throughout the building.

This information is submitted to allow each participant to choose whether to enter the building, or not to enter, given these guidelines.

On October 4th, the Sunday service will include communion with sealed communion cups as well as packaged communion bread. These will be available to pick up upon entry to the church. Outside attendees will also have access to these hosts (from outside).

A decision was made that attendance documentation will not be taken (“Recommended Practice” by the State). Instead, if a case of Covid-19 is reported by someone to the church office or church nurse, then notification (per HIPPA rules) will be addressed accordingly per the church and state procedures.

Continued on next page . . .

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COVID-19 PUBLIC INFORMATION – TO BE POSTED AT EACH ENTRY DOOR:

Return of anyone after having COVID:

You must quarantine for 14 days and be symptom free for 3 days.

If you have any of the following, we ask that you do not attend church:

- Fever (100.4 Fahrenheit or higher), chills or shaking chills
- Cough (not due to other known causes, such as chronic cough)
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Headache, when in combination with other symptoms
- Muscle aches or body aches
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Fatigue, when in combination with other symptoms
- Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies), when in combination with other symptoms

We, the Deacons, miss the traditional services we currently long for again. Due to the times we live in today, this lengthy notification has been challenging and may possibly change. Our prayers go out to our church family and friends for your health, patience, tolerance, wisdom, understanding, respect, and, most importantly, faith in God and our church. Enjoy those precious blessings you find in each day and with each other. May God bless you all.

Respectfully reported,

Deacons: Sue MacPhee, Lynn Largesse, Cindy Ryan, Andy Sharr, Randy Bohn, Cherolyn Cariglio, Linda Hardy, and Ray Rieder

Heating System Financing

Greetings,

As you will find elsewhere in this month's *Tidings*, the heating system for our church is in desperate need of replacement. The upgrade of this system is long overdue. One of the areas of concern with our current oil heating system is the 900-gallon oil tank that is buried outside the church. We know of other churches that have gone bankrupt from cleaning up leaking underground oil tanks, so the sooner we replace ours, the better.

As with past capital projects in our church (roof, sanctuary, driveway), we have asked members to make an additional pledge to help pay the costs associated with the project.

While the Trustees are still waiting for formal bids to be received, they estimate the entire project could cost \$100k to \$150k. The good news is, we already have a substantial amount of money committed to this project. The Pearl Morrill Fund will fund 33% of the cost of the project, up to \$50k. We also have approximately \$23k already donated over the past two years for this project. This means we will need to raise an additional \$44k to \$77k to fully fund this project. Initially, this money will be borrowed from our own invested funds in the form of a loan. We will be asking our members to support a special "boiler pledge" to pay back this loan over the next 2-3 years.

As soon as the Trustees start receiving quotes, they will be communicating via email the details of the amount they will need to borrow to complete the project. A special church meeting will be held on September 13 at 10:35 a.m. to get approval from the membership for this loan. Please prayerfully consider supporting this very important and necessary project.

Thank you,

Nick Stockhaus, Treasurer

PHOTOS, PLEASE!

The Stewardship Committee would love to get pictures from all of you. It will be a fun reminder of our greatest strength – each other – to gather and display some pictures of our church family. Stuck at home? How about digging through the photo albums or shoeboxes? Or swiping through the gallery on your phone?

Seniors, kids, babies, adults, funny and serious pictures... we want to see your smiling (or grumpy) faces! Selfies, groups, whatever strikes your fancy.

It would be great to get a few pictures at church activities...pumpkin patch? Christmas pageant? Camping? but also pictures of you and your family having fun elsewhere. We welcome any pictures you would like to give us. Feel free to provide pictures including the dear departed because they are so important as well.

We want to celebrate those that came before, those well along life's journey, and those just starting out.

We are generations of generosity and caring. Let's create a beautiful reminder of this.

If you have pictures that you would like to share, please get them to the Stewardship Committee... you can **send them to Denise or to Michelle Bigelow**. They can be digital or hard copies you lend us (please write your name on the back). **Thank you!**

In His love,
Your Stewardship Committee
Michelle Bigelow, Nan Johnson, Ron Klaucke, Ellie Lowell, Debbie Mahler, Linda Mahler

Family is not just flesh and blood. It's time, love, caring and sharing. That's family! - Anonymous

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

Web: auburnfirstucc.org



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OR CURRENT RESIDENT