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February 2022

From the Pastor's Desk

Greetings of Grace and Peace!

Last month I wrote about how the Wise followed the star, which guided them onto a new path. I said that we would be continuing to use the Wise Journeyers as our image throughout the year. Since my Bishop of The New England United Methodist Conference has written so clearly about the Wise followers in his last post, I am using his words for this month's Pastor's letter, which follows.

Valentine's Day will so be upon us. Remember to love one another without judgment because God loved us first. 1 John 4:19. Let us breathe deeply of that Good News! Happy Valentine's Day!

Pastor Pat

Beloved in Christ:

Greetings in the precious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

— Matthew 2:10-12, NRSV

When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the

brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

— Luke 4: 28-30, NRSV

As we continue to journey in the season of Epiphany, we can't help but be amazed by how God used Magi to make a manifestation of Christ to the world; I am always intrigued to see how the Magi yielded to the guidance of the Triune God, given their professional knowledge.

God of the Epiphany continues to move in our midst giving us "aha or Epiphany moments!" The challenge for all of us is to catch these moments and use them to glorify our Creator God, filled with the love of Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Needless to say, God's Epiphany moments come to us through many sources — when we read the Word of God, sing hymns, or listen to the witness of a family member, preacher, teacher, colleague, or friend in person or even through social media. Yes, it may even come from a person who is not a friend or well-wisher. The question is, like the Magi, do we see the hand of God in those moments and seize those opportunities to extend the Reign of God in this universe as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ?

One of the Epiphany moments that I experienced came through an email: a hymn composed by Rev. Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, based on the Lectionary Reading, just this past Sunday.

They Raged at Jesus' Sermon

LLANGLOFFAN 7.6.7.6 D ("Lead On, O King Eternal")

They raged at Jesus' sermon in Jesus' own hometown,
For in the things he taught them, he turned life upside down;
It wasn't just their neighbors who knew God's love and grace;
For Jesus said God favors the ones we don't embrace.
God saved a foreign widow and rescued her from drought,
For when she helped Elijah, God also helped her out.
In Naaman, God's own favor to others was revealed;
Though many locals suffered, that Syrian was healed.
In this world's noise and clatter, too often values shift;
We say Christ's words don't matter and throw them off a cliff.

We push aside the stranger, we walk right by the poor,
We disregard the prisoner and say we matter more.
O God, your love is wider than we can comprehend;
You reach to the outsider and call the stranger "friend."
In Christ you gave a message transcending time and place
May we your church have courage to share your love and grace.
There are many Epiphany moments in the words of this hymn; it is
my hope and prayer that as we continue to journey in the season of
Epiphany and beyond, that we will ask ourselves these questions,
and that you will compose your own questions in your journey to
Christian discipleship.

In these challenging times, when we hear a sermon, are we content
with a sugar-coated message designed to please our egos, or do we
yearn for words that will turn our lives upside down?

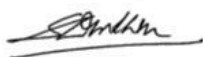
Do we believe God's grace extends to people who are not on our
friend list — as Jesus reminds us, it was God who saved a foreign
widow and Naaman?

How do we make Christ's words matter through our actions and
deeds, even when the world around us is saying to us they do not
matter?

What are some of the concrete things we may do in our lives as
baptized Christians, particularly in light of these words?

O God, your love is wider than we can comprehend;
You reach to the outsider and call the stranger "friend."
In Christ you gave a message transcending time and place
May we your church have courage to share your love and grace.
May God's grace, power, and love be with all of us as we reflect
on these questions and others.

In Christ's love,



Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar

They Raged at Jesus' Sermon

Biblical References: Luke 4:21-30; 1 Kings 17; 2 Kings 5:1-14

Tune: Traditional Welsh melody, from Daniel Evans' *Hymnau a Thonau (Hymns and Tunes)*, 1865
("Lead On, O King Eternal")

Alternate tune: WEBB, George James Webb, 1830 ("Stand Up, Stand Up For Jesus")

Text: Copyright © 2016 by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette. All rights reserved

From the Deacons' Bench

Being the Church

From talking to other congregants, I've found that for many of us, going to church on Sunday was our only contact with "church"- a room in a building. "Church" didn't happen between the Sundays. Over the 32 years I've been a part of FCC, mainline Christian churches have intentionally moved closer to how the early church functioned: the Book of Acts tells us how the early followers of Jesus travelled from community to community, growing the church through **preaching** and **actively serving within each community**.

From Matt Dabbs, preaching minister of Auburn (Alabama) Church of Christ:

"The move is from seeing church as a location where we do certain things, to an *identity*. It is less about ritual and more about relationship. Jesus didn't say "Go into all the world and gather for an hour a week in large rooms apart from everyone else."

[Instead he sent out those on the inside (the disciples) to help those on the outside to understand God's nature, and develop a sustaining relationship with God. (Matthew 28:16-20)]

"Doing" church says:

We get people "to the church" and hope they learn something from someone (Pastor) that will help them learn about God.

"Being" church says

Because we are the church we are not inviting people to a location to "do church". Instead we are inviting them to be among the church (that is, the people) in order for them to see an alternative to the world they live in. The move is from seeing church as a location where we do certain things to an *identity*. It is less about ritual and more about relationship. It is less about talk and more about action."

Our ministry program **Connecting in the Spirit** centers on teaching our children (and reminding ourselves) how to "be the church", in order to make a life-sustaining difference in their lives, our own lives and in our world. We invite you to pray for this ministry, and for your place within it.

Deacon Linda Hornig

Music Update



I still feel like the new kid on the block. I'm finding my way around and getting to know more of you. The resurgence of COVID and the subsequent restrictions have put a few speed bumps on our road. Fortunately, the statistical trends are encouraging. Soon we will be back to "normal" - whatever that means.

Bells will resume rehearsing on Tues., Feb. 8 at 6:00 PM

We will resume Choir Rehearsals on Thurs., February, 10, at 7:00 PM - If you can't make rehearsal and you want to sing on Sunday, come at 9:15 AM before worship. We'll make some music happen.

In other news; we have purchased a new Yamaha digital piano for the sanctuary. It is a versatile instrument that I believe will serve the church well.

I'm still trying to "drum up" interest in a drumming group. There is some definite interest. If you're not interested in actually drumming maybe some of you have hand drums laying around your house gathering dust. Surely someone has their old college dorm bongos (and since we all want to simplify our surroundings), how about donating them to the drumming circle.

Thank you all for your words of welcome and encouragement. Anyone wanting to sing or ring or drum is welcome.

Grace and Peace, Mark Jacobson

Webinar: Single-Board Model Revisited

Many UM churches have adopted what is called the Single-Board Model (or One Board Model) of leadership. Whether you are already using this model or are considering it, this webinar will be helpful to your congregation. We will highlight best practices for and talk about some common mistakes made when implementing this model. This webinar will also go over the basic structure required by the New England Conference. Click the link to register for that session: Link to register will be in weekly news.

1 pm, Monday, Feb. 21, 2022 6:30 pm Monday, Feb. 21, 2022



February Birthdays

Birthday Greetings to the following members of our church who celebrate birthdays in February.



Samantha Quill	02/07
Irene Cutting	02/10
Katrina Safford	02/10
Richard Harris	02/12
Clara Kern	02/18
Ashley Richter	02/18
Sarah Willoughby	02/18
Weston Willoughby	02/18
Kathleen Lee	02/19
Mary Black	02/22
Cody Godin	02/23
Joshua Sterling	02/26
David Kruger	02/27

Wedding Anniversaries

Earl & Barbara Schofield	02/04
Elizabeth & Cody Godin	02/14

Congratulations



Prayer Corner



Evie Meacham
Winnie
Dennis
John (Jack) Bennett
Watson Family
Janet Brehaut
Josh G & Family
Mary Lou Black
Joyce Libby
Pat Safford
Tony Rogers
Rollyn Hatch
Yvette
Christopher
Bob Green
Fran Brown

Doreen
Jaoat
Ed
Adam
Jan
Melinda
Ann
Anna
Kelvin
Doug
Barbara
Phil Stoddard
Jack Hess
Ed
Sherry & Family
Elaine Selfridge

For those battling cancer
For those that grieve the loss of loved ones
For those working on the COVID vaccines
For those who do not have access to COVID vaccines
For first responders & health care workers
For those impacted by weather disasters
For the people Afghanistan
For the people of Haiti
For the changing climate
For our country
For all world leaders
For those traveling
For shut-ins and those who are isolated
For the homeless
For Asian & Black people & all who are persecuted for simply being
how God created them
For transitions within our church

Names will remain on our Prayer List for one month. If someone needs ongoing prayer, please contact the office to relist their name.

Sympathy to...

Joyce Ogonowski & family in the death of Donald Ogonowski, who passed away on January 7th.



Family & friends of Gay Marie (Parizek) Gottier, who passed away on January 20th.



With a Grateful Heart

Thank you for the Christmas cards and gifts received for my family and myself. I am humbled by so many who remembered me and my family in these ways. Some of the gifts have been received without any tags so I do not even know who to thank personally. Please know my heart is deeply warmed by your love and generosity.

Blessings, Pastor Pat

From the Community Survival Center....

Sometimes it is just nice to know who you are helping at the Community Survival Center. I received a call from a man who had lost his job and whose fridge was empty. He had a family of five and needed some help. He said that he was embarrassed to even ask about getting food from our Emergency Food Pantry. When I explained the paperwork needed and told him how many times he could come to the Pantry he said, "I just need help this one time." He said again that he never thought he would need this kind of assistance. I told him that he shouldn't be afraid to ask for help as that is exactly why we are here.

Everybody needs help at some point and we are just glad that we can provide that help. And we provide that help thanks to the

generosity of our donors. Last year, you contributed 98,631 lbs. of food for us to distribute in the Pantry. Wow!

A family of five is given just over 100 lbs. of food in bagged groceries. Each household receives three frozen meat items and enough food to last for eight days

Email from Mary Cassidy,
Executive Director, Community Survival Center



Memorial Committee Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on February 17th at 1:00 PM, here at the church. Thank you for your understanding in having to cancel our previous meeting in January.

Wonderful Wednesday Worship

Looking ahead: our next light lunch and worship will be held on March 16th at 12: 30 PM. We have missed seeing and being with you! Mark your calendars so you will be ready. No appointments or conflicts will be scheduled, unless they are an emergency. If you need a ride, call the church office. We will make sure you are here to join us.



Fellowship Meal

Ash Wednesday Services

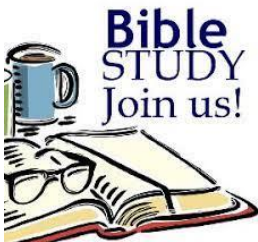
Ash Wednesday, March 2nd

Two Services: at 12: 30 PM and 5: 30 PM

The services will be about half an hour in length. This gives us an opportunity to mark our Christian year as we enter The Lenten Season. COVID has separated us long enough. Let us mark this journey, entering prayer, grief, listening, reflection, recommitment and more, knowing we are journeying and supported by one another.

Bible Study Resumes

February 16th at 10:30 AM



The study will be based on the book by Amy-Jill Levine, “*Witness at the Cross*”. The study will look at the people present at Jesus’ crucifixion. We will meet in Libby Hall. For those who would like to grab a cup of coffee and/or join in conversation before we begin, stop by beginning at 10:00 AM. Pastor Pat will provide some goodies for this time at the first

morning and then have a sign-up list for you to share. All are welcome to join us.

Amy-Jill Levine is a Professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies at Hartford Seminary and Professor Emerita at Vanderbilt University. Professor Levine is the first Jew to teach New Testament at Rome’s Pontifical Biblical Institute. She is among the best teachers and scholars alive. I hope you will join in this new course of hers. You will not be disappointed!

On Site Worship to Resume February 6th

The Board of Directors has decided to allow in person worship again beginning February 6th. Masks are required. We will continue to watch the number of COVID cases in our area and adjust our decision as necessary. We encourage you to watch the numbers as well and decide for yourself what you are comfortable with. While we miss seeing one another in worship and fellowship hour, we want each of us to be healthy and safe. We will continue to post our worship service LIVE on our Facebook page, which can be watched immediately or at another time which is convenient for you. Many of us put time and energy into making sure the worship service is available for you to watch on cable or the internet, I hope that you appreciate the time invested and watch the services. Please pray for our church and one another that we might be able to meet again soon for worship and more.

You Are Invited to "Brave Space Conversations"

The United Methodist Denomination is in the midst of a "divorce." Facing a proposed denominational separation, many United Methodists expect big decisions ahead about where they will make their church home.

The proposed split comes after decades of intensifying debate over LGBTQ inclusion. Now the question before many: Do they want to stay with The United Methodist Church or seek out an alternative?

The NE Vision Forward Team was created at the June 2021 Annual Conference session (with 91 percent approval) in order "to advance the strategic imagination and mission for the New England Conference."

The team has learned that there is a severe lack of trust and need for healing in the New England Conference. The Vision Forward Team and the Delegation to the General & Jurisdictional Conferences invite all members of the New England Conference to

these Brave Space Conversations (town halls) as an opportunity for us begin healing, build trust, and renew our mission.

Three identical sessions (plan to attend one) will take place at 6:30 pm on Jan 24, Feb 7, and Feb 28 via Zoom. These meetings are called, “Brave Space Conversations” on the Future of the New England Conference”

Zoom link for all sessions:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83800962970>

For more information, please visit neacvision.org

Since we are a Federated Community Church, these decisions will affect us all. Please plan to join in one of these meeting so you are educated about our church and the denominational future.



THE GRAY HOUSE *We're Back!*

31st Annual Spaghetti Supper
Honoring the Carey Family

Thursday, March 24, 2022
5:00–7:00 p.m.
The Greek Cultural Center
8 Plainfield Street, Springfield
Adults: Min. donation \$5
Children 6 and under: Free
tickets available at the door

RAFFLES • DINNER • DESSERT

This event will be held in accordance with CDC guidelines.
Please visit our website as we get closer to the event date for any updates.

www.GrayHouse.org/Spaghetti-Supper

In 2021, the Gray House served over 12,000 individuals in need!
Our Spaghetti Supper is essential in allowing us to meet the growing needs of our neighbors. Thank you for your support!

Convergence Leadership Project *features Brian McLaren*

Earlier this year, we joined together with author and activist, Brian McLaren, to study his latest book, “Faith After Doubt.” What a great experience! After hearing so many requests for more time with Brian, we reached out to him and his colleagues at Convergence to explore next steps. We are excited to invite New England clergy and laity to participate in for four online courses in 2022 taught by Brian and the Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis. Each video course will include a live session with McLaren.

We are working on getting CEU’s for those who participate in the live sessions and the asynchronous portions of Brian McLaren’s leadership project.

Topic dates and time set for live sessions with Brian McLaren

For each course topic, there will be a live online event with Brian where he will dive deeper into the ideas explored in the course and take questions. **The live events will begin at 7 pm on:**

- **Tuesday, Feb. 22, 2022 — Church Impact**
- **Tuesday, April 5, 2022 — Your Message Matters**
- **Tuesday, Sept. 20, 2022 — Curating Change**
- **Tuesday, Nov. 15, 2022 — Your Congregation as a School of Love**



Missions

February White Out Blizzard!

All month we will be collecting donations of any items of the following:


- Paper plates/bowls, Napkins, Cups, Paper Towels, Tissues, Toilet paper, disposable silverware
- Feminine Hygiene Products
- Juvenile Diapers. Baby Wipes
- Toiletries (examples) - Any Size
Mouthwash, Toothbrush, Toothpaste, Dental floss/picks, Hand Sanitizer, Soap, Bodywash, Shampoo, Conditioner, Hand Lotion, Body Lotion, Wipes (Flushable or not, sold usually in toilet paper isle, or baby wipes), Deodorant, Shave Cream
- New White T-shirts, Socks and Underwear - can be Men or Women!

Items will be donated to the Community Survival Center, the Springfield Rescue Mission as well as others. If you have any suggestions of organizations that may need donations, please email Joyce Brooks @ joyjoybrooks70@gmail.com

Thank you in advance!
Blessings from Joyce!



FEBRUARY 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 6:00 PM AA	2 1:00 PM Missions	3 5:00 PM Renovation Team	4 7:30 PM AA	5
6 10:00 AM in person Worship resumes CYFF begins in classrooms	7 9:30 AM Spirit Chat 4:45 PM CE Ministry Team	8 6:00 PM Bell Choir 6:00 PM AA 7:00 PM Finance	9	10 5:30 PM Renovation Team	11 7:30 PM AA	12 8:00 AM Men's Breakfast
13 10:00 AM Worship * CY Faith Form	14 9:30 AM Spirit Chat 4:45 PM CE Ministry Team	15 6:00 PM Bell Choir 6:00 PM AA 7:00 PM BOD	16 10:30 AM Bible Study	17 5:30 PM Renovation Team 1:00 PM Memorial Gifts 7:00 PM Choir	18 7:30 PM AA	19
20 10:00 AM Worship * CY Faith Form	21 9:30 AM Spirit Chat	22 6:00 PM Bell Choir 6:00 PM AA	23 10:30 AM Bible Study	24 5:30 PM Renovation Team 7:00 PM Choir	25 7:30 PM AA	26 8:00 AM Men's Breakfast
27 10:00 AM Worship * CY Faith Form	28 9:30 AM Spirit Chat				* Children/Youth Faith Formation will begin in the sanctuary and will be dismissed after approx. 15 minutes	