



The Beacon

First Congregational Church of Millbury, United Church of Christ

Our Mission: To welcome and inspire ALL through faith, love,
and fellowship according to Christ's example.

Volume 26 Issue 12 • December 2015

Sowing Seeds

"...In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

(Acts 20:35, New Revised Standard Version)

Dear Friends,

More and more, these words of Jesus quoted by the Apostle Paul are coming to life at First Church, and it is a beautiful thing to behold: the knitting ministry's crafting of winter apparel for the people of Worcester Fellowship and Millbury-ites in need, our recommitment to Rhodes House as demonstrated by a visit there in October, and, more recently, our collection of fruits and vegetables to be cooked and enjoyed by the women over Thanksgiving; the crafting of fleece blankets for Millbury school children by our own Sunday school kids, our donations of gently used clothing to Grace's Garments' clothing ministry, and our long term dedication to sister churches in the South, most recently demonstrated by the ordering of Christmas wreaths to support the Lord's Builders annual mission trip. **We are *being* the church!**

If we closely observe the ministries of Jesus, his disciples, the Apostle Paul, etc. they are almost always outwardly focused. The baby and then the man Jesus came to give life and hope to those who most desperately needed it. And so, as his disciples, we go and do likewise. The thing that often surprises people when they get started with mission and ministry is how good it feels to them personally; that is, *how much they get out of it*. Sometimes people will feel guilty about this, like it is selfish and should not feel as great as it can and often does. But we need not feel guilty. It's part of the blessing that is tied up in the act of giving. It feels good because it *is* good. Peoples' lives and needs are being honored and met. We are walking in the way of our Lord, teacher, and Savior. Not only that, but we are following in *God's* footsteps, feeding, clothing, and giving back to the world our Creator made and nurtures, the biggest gift of all, of course, being that of Jesus--a human manifestation of God's presence, love, and care on earth.

I know we're all terribly busy this time of year, but I'd like to offer you a few more opportunities to give back here and now, which members of our church family have brought forward:

†Cheryl Ordway is seeking people to help plan, shop for, and prepare a holiday meal for the women of **Rhodes House**; as well as people who can plan and shop for Christmas gifts for the women. We have done these things for the women in the past, and it has always been a joyful experience. We're now looking for several more sets of hands to make the work lighter.

†Deanna Murray has received a request from **Elmwood Elementary School** for gently used winter jackets, hats, scarves, and gloves/mittens for students in need there. They can be left by the gray tote in the downstairs entryway where we have been making donations for Grace's Garments. Deanna will deliver them to the school on behalf of the church.

†Once again we're collecting white gifts and Gorette's gift certificates on the same Sunday as our Christmas pageant (the 13th this year).

As in the past, the certificates will go to **Millbury seniors in need**. However, this year our white gifts will go to a **Millbury family in need**, rather than AIDS Project Worcester. If you haven't already, you're invited to take a paper ornament with a gift request written on it to purchase for the seniors or a family.

Keep up the great work, my friends, and may the love and light of the Christ child shine brightly upon you and your loved ones this Advent and Christmas season and always.

Abundant Blessings,

Pastor Carol

**YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED
TO AN OPEN HOUSE**

WHERE The Parsonage
11 Beach Street
Millbury

WHEN Sunday, December 13
3:00-5:00 pm

WHAT TO BRING Yourself

FOR DIRECTIONS 508-581-4153

Coming Up in Worship

December 6 **Joint Music/Communion Service at Pakachoag Church, Auburn at 10:00 am**

Scripture Readings: Luke 3:1-16,
Luke 1:68-79

Pakachoag Church extends a warm welcome to First Church members and friends to join them for a joyful Advent service of music, scripture, prayer, and communion in the pews. Our choir members will join with theirs, plus we will get to hear Pakachoag School of Music students perform, and both Brenda Salvi and Joyce Carpenter-Henderson play the piano and their magnificent organ. Pakachoag Church is located at 203 Pakachoag Street, is on one level and fully accessible to all. Coffee hour and a Christmas pageant rehearsal will follow the service.

December 13 **Christmas Pageant and White Gift Service at 10:00 am**

Scripture Reading: tbd

This week Pakachoag Church will join us on West Main Street. Their children and ours will present a delightful Christmas pageant. Both of our choirs will provide the musical accompaniment. White gifts will be collected for Millbury children in need and Goretti's gift certificates for seniors in need.

December 19 **Blue Christmas Service at St. John's Episcopal Church in Sutton at 5:00 pm**

The Christmas season can be an especially challenging time of year for those who are dealing with grief, depression, divorce, job loss, etc. There is pressure to "put on a happy face" and "be of good cheer," though the feelings inside may be anything but. We invite you to bring your *whole selves* to this quiet service two days before the darkest day of the year, and find healing and nurture in the words that are spoken, the music that is played, and the communion that is shared. St. John's is located at 3 Pleasant Street, right off of Route 122A.

December 20 **Christmas Sunday Worship at 10:00 am**

Scripture Readings: Luke 1:47-55,
Luke 1:39-45

December 24 **Christmas Eve Worship at 4:00 pm**

Scripture Readings: Various
Join us for a joyous service of lessons, carols, and candlelight as we ponder and celebrate God's awesome gift of Jesus the Christ to each one of us and our world. Pakachoag Church will again be our guests, and Rev. Dennis Knight will co-officiate with Pastor Carol.

December 27 **Christmas Carol Sing/First Sunday after Christmas Worship at 10:00 am**

Scripture Readings: tbd
Sing all your favorite carols during this relaxed service.

January 3 **Epiphany & Communion Sunday Worship at 10:00 am**

Scripture Readings: Isaiah 60:1-6,
Matthew 2:1-12

Have you seen...?

Our missing hearing assistance devices, large print Hymnals and black wooden book stand? If so, could you please kindly return them to the sanctuary? Many thanks.

Joys, Congratulations & Thanksgiving

A big thank you to **Jim F.**, who organized this year's Turkey Raffle, and to all who contributed to the event in ways large and small: selling tickets, contributing prizes, preparing and selling food, MCing, etc., etc.

Many thanks also to **Janice** and **Carol D.** for making another wonderful round of yoga happen. We look forward to resuming again in January.

We are extremely grateful to **Cindy B.** who continues to care take the church and the parsonage, making small repairs, adjusting the heat, taking out the trash, and, most recently, removing leftover parsonage attic wood from the front lawn.

Kudos to the **Sunday School Kids** for making fleece blankets for other local kids in need and to **Deanna** for teaching them how to do it!

Many thanks to **Rev. Lisa Green** and **St. John's Episcopal Church** for allowing our confirmation class to meet in their Fellowship Hall on November 22.

Thank you to **Fran Graveson** for representing us at the ecumenical Thanksgiving service at Assumption Church, where she may also have witnessed the first woman preaching from their pulpit. (Way to go, **Rev. Lisa Green!**)

We're so thankful to all who took time out of their Saturday mornings to decorate the sanctuary for Christmas, including **Jeri, Ron, Heather, Steve, Amy P., Justin, Georgia,**

Fran, & Jenn. Thanks also to the Boy Scouts for taking away a desk from the church office and to **Sukie & Daniel** for donating a large Christmas tree for us to use.

A big thank-you from **Grace's Garments**, Millbury Baptist Church's clothing ministry, for the many clothing donations our church has made in recent months. We are extremely grateful to **Deanna** for organizing and delivering these donations to the on our behalf.

Many thanks to **all who contributed to our Thanksgiving Sunday Stone Soup**, to **Amy P.** for lending us the huge soup pot, and to **Cheryl O.** and **Bob L.** for delivering the fruits and veggies to Rhodes House!

Remember our shut-ins with a note or a card.....

Mrs. Charlotte Stockwell
395 West Main Street
Millbury, MA 01527

Mr. Jay Stockwell
110 Hartness Road
Sutton, MA 01590

Mr. Jack Swedburg
58 Carleton Rd.
P.O. Box 34
West Millbury, Ma. 01527

Mrs. Thelma Swedburg
St. Camillus Nursing Home
447 Hill St.
Whitinsville, Ma. 01588

The White Christmas Giving Tree Ornaments

Please bring your gift wrapped in white paper to the **White Gift Service on Dec. 13th.** The Goretta's Gift Certificates can be deposited in the little church on the back table.



Prayers & Concerns

- † Jay S. and his family
- † Joan & Hunter
- † Nicholas M.
- † Joanne
- † Julie
- † Jim P.
- † Debbie
- † Gail and her family
- † Sandra and Paul
- † Ann
- † Ronnie
- † Thelma, Jack & Family
- † Ethan and Tim
- † Jeri's & Ron's cousin Everett
- † Ron's brother Peter
- † Bob L's mother Terry
- † Cindy C. and Linda A.
- † Jake, who's serving again in Afghanistan
- † The Ellsessar Family
- † All who are experiencing their first holiday season without a loved one
- † First Congregational Church, Sutton
- † The Rev. Victoria Snow's father Charles
- † Anna Marie, Dirk E.'s mother
- † Cassidy's friend Anthony, who has cancer
- † Kristy and her family
- † Sukie's father Gurdip Singh Bansai
- † Our Church and Local Community
- † Our Returning Veterans
- † The Women of Rhodes House
- † AA Members who meet weekly in our hall
- † Worcester Fellowship Pastors & People
- † The homeless in Worcester and beyond





- 1st John O'Donnell
- 3rd Delaney R. Bernier
- 4th Nathan J. Minor
- 6th Latitia A. Swanson
- 9th Dirk Enthoven
- 10th Bernice R. Pokraka
- 20th Amy E. Peterson
- 21st Stephanie A. White
- 24th Karen O'Donnell
- 31st Michelle M. Rudge

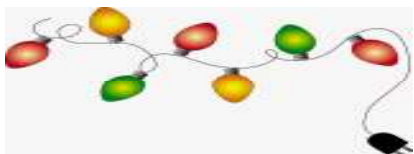
Do you like to knit or crochet?

Are you interested in learning or refreshing some rusty skills? Our group continues to meet most Monday evenings at Cindy Bradway's home, all are welcome to participate; men and women, young and old, experienced and first-timers. If interested contact Amy West or Deanna Murray for details.



Chain of Lights Bakery Table

Please gather your favorite recipes and donate some delicious baked goods to the Bakery Table at the Chain of Lights Fair on December 6th from 11 a.m. to 4 pm. You can bring your baked items Sunday morning beginning at 8:30 am. If you have any questions, please call Jeri Stead (508 865 5351).



Millbury Chain of Lights



We are pleased to announce we will be participating in the Chain of Lights this year on Sunday, Dec. 6th in our own Fellowship Hall. In addition to some of our usual tables, this year we will be featuring some outside vendor tables. Vendor Tables will include Jamberry Nails, The Bear Lady, Thirty-One Gifts, Tastefully Simple as well Acrylic & Watercolor Paintings. Each vendor will be donating one of their items to our usual Raffle Table items. The kitchen will be serving hot and cold beverages, desserts and coffee café style so you can sit a spell if you like. Christine Hamer has been busy making beautiful Seasonal Wreaths and we are inviting all our talented members and friends to donate arts or crafts of any kind to our church table. If you have any used books to offer, you may drop them off in the downstairs closet next to the lift, prior to the Chain for sorting. Looking forward to seeing you all there.

Returning to First Church Millbury January 2016 All Levels Yoga Class in Fellowship Hall Fridays, 4:15-5:15 pm

We are so pleased to welcome back Carol Dearborn who will teach a weekly All Levels Yoga Class. Carol has taken over 200 hours of classes and is certified in CPR and as a Group Instructor. She taught yoga at Whitins Community Center for the Fallon Health Care Plan, Silver Sneakers Program and is currently teaching various levels in surrounding towns.

Carol is able to provide yoga mats for those who do not own one and can readily adapt her techniques to accommodate seniors and others who need to remain seated in a chair.

Drop-In Fee is **\$5.00 per class, \$3.00 for seniors.**
Proceeds will benefit the Church.
There will be a series of 8 Classes,
Fridays Jan.8th to Feb. 26th 2016 at 4:15pm.

After 8 weeks, Carol will evaluate to determine whether there is sufficient interest to continue offering classes at the church.

EVERYONE is welcome!

For more information you can contact **Janice Fortin** at 508-826-6381.



Summary of November Meeting

The Church Council met November 5th. The following summary gives a brief overview of the topics that had a new discussion, gave an update, or received a decision.

Topics discussed

Sanctuary Sound System

Carol noted numerous problems with the lapel and wireless mics on November 1st. As of yet, and despite several requests, the Guitar Center have refused to come to the church to test the sound system. The Guitar center did test the lapel mic and recommended it be sent back to the manufacturer. Jim M will call Union music and request they visit the church to access our sound system.

Income Opportunities

- Amy West discussed the preparations for the Chain of Lights.
- Amy West reported that the Tastefully Simple was small but successful.
- Jim F. reported that tickets for the Turkey Raffle are being sold at Gorette's. He is worried about the number of gifts so far, but is told they will come in at the end. Fran will post the Turkey Raffle on the Facebook site.
- We will wait for Ron for the Solar Panel update.
- The Council reviewed the church rental fees. Carol provided the fees researched by Grafton Congregational. The Council unanimously approved a new fee structure. However, more review of the wording of the rental agreement is required. It will be discussed in December.
- Carol noted that she had finally reached the fund raising contact at the Publick House directly, and he confirmed that we will be able to have a fund raiser dinner there in either 2016 or 2017. (They schedule the dinners a year at a time.)

Updates

Pastor Update

- Paul Concemi has requested that the Death and Dying seminar at the Brierly Pond clubhouse be held during Lent, so Carol has agreed to schedule for February/March. She is currently gathering the 2015 presenters to tweak the series and draft a proposal for approval by the Brierly Pond Board. Paul's vision is that Brierly Pond would sponsor the event, and the general public would be invited to participate.
- Packachoag Church would like to partner with us for several events in December:
- **Dec 6th**: They would like to host us on December 6th for a music and communion service at their church. This will work well, as Sunday school and the Deacons had scheduling and spatial challenges around the Chain of Lights. Council members were very supportive of this idea.
- **Dec 13th**: They would like to partner with us for the Pageant. They have an assistant director, musicians, and actors to contribute; and are willing to pay for the Pageant script and music. Pastor Carol is arranging meetings with the organizers of the pageant from both churches to plan the event.
- **Dec 24th**: Although we didn't discuss it in our meeting, they would also like to join us for Christmas Eve.
- During the Congregational Chats we had discussed having a theology professor visit our church for an open discussion. Carol has found that the Federated Church (UCC-UU) in Sturbridge is also interested in such an event. A former president of Bangor Seminary is available now, but we have many events coming up. Pastor Carol asked the Council if we would like to have the professor come in the fall or spring, as he is away during the winter. The Council thought the spring would be

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better. Carol will schedule. *Since the Council Meeting, this event has been scheduled for after church on Sunday, April 10.*

Carol noted the following financial items

- Linda researched the difference between the Charter or Verizon internet charges. There is not a large difference. Carol is going to ask Deb and Marie about their preference and then decide which carrier to choose. Fran noted that we also pay for batteries each year for the Verizon FIOS box.
- Deb reported to Fran and Carol that an error has been made in Carol's paycheck this year. The Housing Allowance that is meant to be just a categorization of Carol's compensation was actually deducted from Carol pay. The church owes Carol \$2,000 due to this mistake. Deb will be correcting the issue in November.
- Carol noted that Deb is going on vacation until November 20th. Expense reports for 2016 budget planning will be available in December.
- Deb has told Carol that her health insurance premiums will increase by 5% this year. Carol asked the Council to consider a salary increase to cover this increased expense. Fran to follow up with Deb as to when the increase will take effect and if this can be handled through the 2016 budget process.
- Carol asked the Council for feedback about the possibility of her reaching out to NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) to ask if the Worcester Chapter would like to hold a support group meeting for family members of suicide victims at our church. This would be a support to the local community and church members alike. She will contact the local chapter to see if this is possible and what it entails. This would be a mission/ministry for the church and would not have a rental fee.
- Carol noted that the Beacon Deadline is November 15th.

Building & Grounds

- Kathy Adams will not be able to attend any church events in the church building until the level of mold is reduced. Jim reported his research indicated that Wave Home Solution proved to be the lowest cost option, with units priced at \$600-\$700, which can cover 800 sq ft. However, the dealer has expressed concerns about the unit working in an environment with variable temperature. Jim will contact Aerus again, the dealer who presented to the congregation. The Council has requested obtaining clarity on return policies, guarantees and if we can have a trial period before buying. Additionally, does the Aerus unit also need a consistent temperature to work properly? If so, how is "consistent" defined? The Council would like to have all information needed to make a decision before any payments could be worked into the 2016 budget.
- Jim is having the parsonage gutters cleaned on 11/21.
- Ron is still waiting to hear from the Boy Scouts in regards to them taking the Pastor's office desk.
- Fran will ask Cindy to investigate the cost of having the trash company remove the excess wood in front of the parsonage.
- Current arrangements for snow removal were discussed. Jim will confirm with Dave as to whether he will be plowing this year. Linda will ask her neighbor if he wants to shovel. Fran will ask Deb what we pay per storm for the snow to be shoveled.



Association, Conference and Other Events

Christmas Fair

First Congregational Church
135 Center Rd., Dudley
Saturday, December 5th
10:00AM - 4:00PM

There will be numerous crafters, baked goods, live entertainment, luncheon, basket and quilt raffle, and our famous goods and services auction.

Christmas Faire

Pilgrim Congregational Church, UCC
26 West Street, Leominster
Saturday, December 5th
10:00AM - 5:00PM

Cookie Shop, Mrs. Clause's Attic, Pet Toys, Crafts. Many more gift ideas.



Alternative Gift Fair

Edwards Church
39 Edwards Street, Framingham
Saturday, December 5th
1:00 - 4:00PM

Fair trade coffee, tea, and chocolate. Handicrafts from Artists' Coops around the world. Plus more.

Breakfast with Santa

Hopedale Union Church, UCC
25 Dutcher Street, Hopedale
Saturday, December 5th
8:00 - 11:00AM

All-you-can-eat Pancake Breakfast! Free Picture with Santa! Fund kid's crafts & face painting! Christmas Crafts and Baked Goods! Admission: \$5.00 at the door

Refugee Resettlement: A Conversation and Q & A with R.I.A.C.

United Congregational Church, 6 Institute Road, Worcester
Sunday, December 6th, 11:45AM - 1:00PM

(Light Lunch Offered)

Please join us as we welcome Miriam Gas, Executive Director of R.I.A.C. (the Refugee and Immigrant Assistance Center) with offices in Boston, Lynn, and Worcester. Miriam brings passion, energy, and persistent enthusiasm to this most important work of resettlement. Come hear what is happening, how we can receive and support folds as they look to settle here with their families. For more information 508-752-3785, staff@ucc-worcester.org, or ucc-worcester.org.

Medical Mission Trip to La Romana, Dominican Republic

March 4-13, 2016

First Church in Sterling invites you to be part of this ecumenical mission. We will travel to the impoverished sugar cane villages, serving both the Haitian & Dominican poor. A diverse group of participants offer medical clinics & outreach and construction work at schools, the Good Samaritan Hospital, and/or water filter program among other possibilities. Medical providers, constructions workers (skilled & unskilled) and youth (16+ years old) are welcome.

Interested? The **2016 Orientation Guide Highlighted Updated 031315** and **2016-APPLICATION-medical-and-trip-release** can both be downloaded from the church website at www.fcsterling.org.



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Haiti Mission Trip

April 2016

Mr. Art Sharkey and Mr. Mike Lawler of the Congregational Church of Westborough, will return to Haiti for their 3rd Mission Trip April 16-23, working with Heartline Ministries (website: <http://heartlineministries.org>). The estimated cost is \$1,800. The schedule will include working at the different Heartline properties that house their Maternity Center, Men's Discipleship Program, Women's Training and Education Programs. Other assigned work may include projects at local orphanages and food distribution groups. Daily schedule based on the project needs of our host organization leaders. Need to finalize our roster of participants and make our reservations by year-end 2015. Contacts: Art Sharkey - asharkey@charter.net; 508 826-1084, Mike Lawler - mlawler@anchorengineering.com; 508 922-8532

The Maine Conference, United Church of Christ cordially invites you to join us on a returning Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

April 16 - April 23, 2016

The Pilgrimage will acquaint participants with the geographical and cultural settings of the New Testament and relate historical studies to contemporary dynamics in Israel, Palestine, and Jordan. The pilgrimage will include morning and evening discussion groups on the historical and contemporary themes and visits with indigenous people. This trip is designed to introduce participants to the state of the art of biblical studies in the Holy Land. Please use this link to learn more:

<http://files.ctctcdn.com/44d9d514001/689a9af2-743f-4c8f-b5c7-f12b2828fcba.pdf>



POINSETTIA ORDER FORM

Please place your order along with your payment in the Christmas Basket at rear of sanctuary.

Orders are needed by **DECEMBER 14.**



Make check payable to Amy West.

Please place my order for _____ Poinsettia plant(s), at \$12.50 each, to be delivered to the First Congregational Church of Millbury and displayed at the 4:00 p.m. service on December 24th.

Given in Memory of _____

Given in Celebration of _____

Name _____

Telephone _____

Amount Enclosed

\$ _____

**First Congregational Church
of Millbury, UCC**

148 West Main Street
Millbury, MA 01527

Address Correction Requested

The Beacon

**December
2015**



Worship and Church School: 10:00 a.m.
Rev. Carol Reynolds, Pastor
Church Phone: 508-865-9737
Email: Millbury1stChurch@verizon.net
Web: www.MillburyFirstChurch.org



OFFICE HOURS, ETC.

Rev. Carol Reynolds is available by phone at the parsonage at [\(508\) 581-4153](tel:5085814153) or by email at pastor.millbury1stchurch@verizon.net.

Office hours are by appointment.

Carol's normal work week is Wednesday through Sunday. In cases of emergency on her days off (Monday and Tuesday), please call her cell phone at [\(508\)-282-9511](tel:5082829511).



The Church Calendar can be viewed at millburyfirstchurch.org. To add an event, please email either Millbury1stchurch@verizon.net or jalbert9@msn.com.

Remember to check us out on Facebook. **See all the photos.** It's a great way to introduce your friends to our Friendly Church on the Hill.

The Beacon

Deadline for the January issue is **December 20**. The **BEACON** is distributed by email or first class mail. It can also be downloaded from the church website. Copies are available at the back of the sanctuary.

2015