



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 27 Issue 1 • January 2016

Sowing Seeds

*Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old.
I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.
...for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people,
the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.*

(Isaiah 43:18-21, New Revised Standard Version)

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year to you! As the saying goes, “Out with the old and in with the new.” In many respects, 2015 was an extremely challenging year. We lost a number of beloved older members of our immediate and extended community, making our hearts ache. Terrorism and gun violence took a toll on not only our nation, but the whole world. Political speech descended to new lows. Even in our own little corner of the world, we struggled to understand one another and move our church forward in a positive, mutually agreeable direction. And so, 2016 comes as a breath of fresh air. In fact, we have laid the groundwork to do some new, very valuable work with our coach Rev. Charlotte Wright, work that promises to bring hope for healing, wholeness, and a renewed sense of purpose—water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert.

On **Sunday, January 17**, Charlotte will join us for worship. Then we will come together for a congregational meeting to recap the dialogues Charlotte had with us on November 22 and December 19, and to further sharpen our ability to engage in healthy conversations with one another. From there, the goal will be for us to begin to get a clearer sense of our purpose as a faith community and to move in the direction of becoming a truly **purpose driven congregation**. This will not be easy work, but it will be worthwhile, transformative, illuminating work. As we have seen with the knitting group, a renewed sense of purpose brings energy and excitement. It attracts people and makes them want to stick around. Not only that, but it cultivates the Holy Spirit's presence and work, allowing needs to be brought to light and fulfilled in some really beautiful ways. All of these are things to look forward to, true *thirst quenchers* for parched souls wandering in the desert.

I also want to draw your attention to **another new thing God is doing in the Millbury-Sutton community**. As I have shared with some of you, the priests of Assumption/St. Brigid's and St. Mark's Roman Catholic churches have recently become active members of the ecumenical clergy group. So active, in fact, that they are the driving force behind our moving in a more and more cooperative direction—toward true, reciprocal Christian friendship. In November, Assumption hosted an ecumenical Thanksgiving service during which a clergywoman was enthusiastically invited to preach (and did!). In December, one of the priests suggested we unite again, sooner rather than later, to celebrate Christian Unity Week in January. Further, it was suggested that our “Friendly Church on the Hill” host the event, which will be a sharing of one another's ways of praying, reading scripture, and singing. This service will occur in our sanctuary at **7 pm on Wednesday, January 20**. We clergy folks will do our best to publicize it as widely as possible, but we also invite you to take every opportunity to tell your friends of all denominations about it. With so much discord in the world, any space we can carve out for unity, peace, and understanding is a victory for us and for Christ.

Keep up the great work, my friends, and may the love and light of the magis' star shine brightly upon you and your loved ones during this season of Epiphany and always.

Abundant Blessings,

Pastor Carol

Coming Up in Worship

- January 3** **Epiphany & Communion Sunday Worship at 10:00 am**
Scripture Readings:
 Isaiah 60:1-6, Matthew 2:1-12
 We celebrate communion, the New Year, and the arrival of the magi in Bethlehem.
- January 10** **Baptism of Christ Worship Service, Pakachoag Church's Rev. Dennis Knight preaching at 10:00 am**
Scripture Readings:
 Acts 8:14-17; Hebrews 11:1-3, 12:1-2
- January 17** **Martin Luther King, Jr. Worship Service at 10:00 am, Potluck & Congregational Gathering with Rev. Charlotte Wright at 11:15 am**
Scripture Reading:
 I Corinthians 12:1-11
- January 20** **Ecumenical Christian Unity Service at 7:00 pm**
 Join us for a groundbreaking ecumenical service of prayer, song, and scripture for the Millbury/Sutton community, during which we will celebrate our unity and diversity as Christians. Co-leading the service will be clergy from Millbury Baptist, the Federated Church, St. Brigid's, Assumption Catholic Churches, St. John's Episcopal Church, First Congregational, Sutton; and St. Mark's Catholic Church.
- January 24** **Third Sunday after Epiphany Worship Service at 10:00 am**
Scripture Reading:
 I Corinthians 12:12-31a
- January 31** **Fourth Sunday after Epiphany Worship at 4:00 pm**
Scripture Reading:
 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

February 7 **Transfiguration & Communion Sunday Worship at 10:00 am**
Scripture Readings:
 Exodus 34:29-35,
 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2



Mark Your Calendar!

2016

Annual Membership Meeting Will be held after worship on Sunday February 21st.

Have you seen...?

We are missing quite a few of the folding chairs from Fellowship Hall. If you borrowed them, could you please return them at your very earliest convenience.

We also are missing hearing assistance devices, large print hymnals and black wooden book stand? If so, could you please kindly return them to the sanctuary?



Thank you.

TRUE HAPPINESS

A happy life is not built on expensive tours abroad and pleasant vacations, but of little clumps of violets by the roadside, almost hidden away so that only those can see them who have God's peace and love in their hearts; it is one long, continuous chain of little joys; little whispers from the spiritual world; little rays of sunshine on our daily walk.

The Christian Church
 Redmond, OK

Joys, Congratulations & Thanksgiving

Congratulations to **Jeri** and **Ron**, who recently celebrated their 51st wedding anniversary and to **Leah** and **Amy**, who each recently had milestone birthdays.

Many thanks to **Jeri**, who led the Hanging of the Greens Service on 11/29 while Pastor Carol was on vacation.

We are extremely grateful to **Rev. Dennis Knight and Pakachoag Church** for the warm welcome they extended to us during our joint worship service and fellowship time there 12/6.

Bravo to ours and Pakachoag Church's **Choirs** and **Sunday School Kids**, as well as to **Leah, Joyce, Brenda, and Lainey** for the fabulous Christmas pageant experience to which they treated us on 12/10. Kudos also to **Don** and **Tim** for the always fabulous stage construction job.

Many thanks to **Deanna, Cindy C., and Kathy** for organizing this year's White Gift giving to local students and families and to **Jeri** for coordinating our giving to Millbury seniors.

Thanks also to our **Monday night knitters** who made 200 woolen garments for Worcester Fellowship and to **Cheryl O.** and **Bob** who delivered them.

Thanks to everyone who gave both new gifts and gently used coats. Word is, all were extremely eagerly received.

We're so thankful to all helped to make this year's **Chain of Lights** event a success, whether by contributing baked goods, crafts, or wreaths; working in the kitchen or behind a table, setting

up or cleaning up. Thanks to everyone's efforts, around \$1400 was made for the church this year!

A big thank-you to **Amy W.** for organizing the Christmas poinsettias once again this year.

Many thanks to **Karen and Cindy C.**, who both donated nativity scenes to the church when the plea went for a crèche went out.

Congratulations to **Tim**, who recently received a New England Institute of Technology Alumni Scholarship! Keep up the great work!

We share **Amy P's** joy that **Jake** was able to make it home from Afghanistan in time for Christmas.

Pastor Carol wishes to extend a HUGE thank-you to the **Deacons** for all of their help with the parsonage open house refreshments. Couldn't have done it without you! She also wishes to thank **all who came** and to reassure those who were unable to make it that she plans to do another one at a less busy time of year.

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

Prayers & Concerns

- † Jay S. and his family
- † Joan & Hunter
- † Ronnie
- † Thelma, Jack & Family
- † Ethan and Tim
- † Jeri's & Ron's cousin Everett
- † Ron's brother Peter
- † Cindy C. and Linda A.
- † Jake, who's serving again in Afghanistan
- † The Ellsesser Family
- † Anna Marie, Dirk E.'s mother
- † Cassidy's friend Anthony, who has cancer
- † Kristy and her family
- † Elisa and Mason
- † Margaret Guertin
- † Joann Sheperd
- † Cheryl's cousin Alana
- † The People of Chennai, India
- † Linda P's niece Tamara
- † Sandra
- † Nancy A.
- † Sukie's father Gurdip Singh Bansai
- † Rev. Dennis Knight, whose brother has died
- † Family and friends of Betty-Ann Hedlund, including Jeri Marilyn's and Bill's daughter-in-law Karen, who lost both her parents in 2015.
- † Our Confirmands: Abbey, Abby, Megan, & Laura
- † 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





- 4th Neal Riley
- 7th Philip Nyberg
- 11th Michael Swanson
- 12th Steven Elie
- 12th Elizabeth Roberts
- 14th Andrea Place
- 16th Richard Harrington
- 18th Cassidy Jacobs
- 18th Timothy Jenkel
- 18th Karrie Perry
- 24th Kerry Gobron
- 24th Alexis White
- 26th Jeffrey Graveson
- 28th Denise Rudge
- 31st Cheryl Storer

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.

REVOLUTIONARY AGREEMENTS

TRUTH

I AGREE TO

Live my mission.
Speak my truth, with compassion.
Look within when I react.
Keep doing what works and change what doesn't.

ACCEPTANCE

I AGREE TO

Listen with my heart.
Respect our differences.
Resolve conflicts directly.
Honor our choices.

GRATITUDE

I AGREE TO

Give and receive thanks.
See the best in myself and others.
Look for blessings in disguise.
Lighten up!

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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.

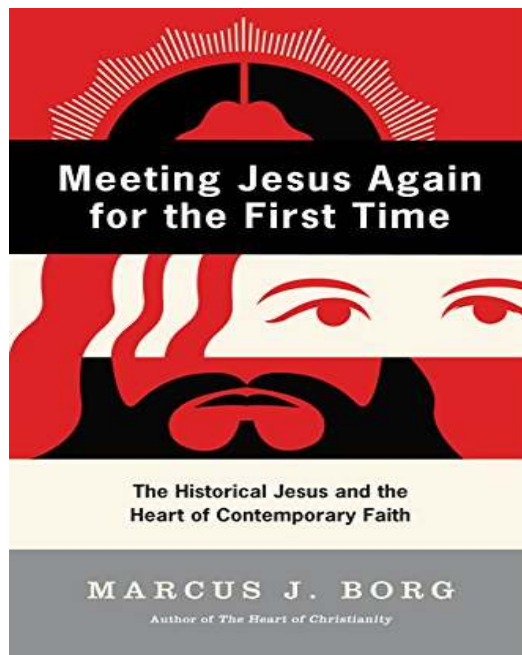
After 8 weeks, Carol will evaluate to determine whether there is sufficient interest to continue offering classes at the church.

EVERYONE is welcome!

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



**New Wednesday Evening Book Discussion Group for Epiphany!
January 6, 13, 27 & February 3 at Millbury Public Library
6:15-7:45 pm**



Of the many recent books on the historical Jesus, none has explored what the latest biblical scholarship means for personal faith. Now, in *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, Marcus Borg addresses the yearnings of those who want a fully contemporary faith that welcomes our critical intelligence and openness to the best of historical scholarship. Borg shows how a rigorous examination of historical findings can lead to a new faith in Christ, one that is critical and, at the same time, sustaining.

Drawing on his own journey from unquestioning belief through collegiate skepticism to a mature and contemporary Christian faith, Borg illustrates how an understanding of the historical Jesus can actually lead to a more authentic Christian life—one not rooted in creed or dogma, but in a life of spiritual challenge, compassion, and community.

In straightforward, accessible prose, Borg looks at the major findings of modern Jesus scholarship from the perspective of faith, bringing alive the many levels of Jesus' character: spirit person, teacher of alternative wisdom, social prophet, and movement founder. He also reexamines major Old Testament stories vital to an authentic understanding of Jesus.

Sign up on the church's Facebook page or use the sign-up sheet in Fellowship Hall.

Available in **Paperback**: Amazon, \$13.50; special order from bookstores, \$14.99
Also available as an **E-Book** for \$9.99.

“Borg provides an account of contemporary Jesus scholarship—told in simple language for lay readers—and of his personal struggle to find authentic, mature faith. Highly recommended.” — *Library Journal*
“For many contemporary Christians, Biblical scholarship is seen as the enemy of faith. In a personal and highly readable account, Marcus Borg shows how Christians can explore contemporary scholarship as a way toward a far more dynamic and meaningful faith.” — **Rosemary Radford Ruether, author of *Gaia and God***

Association, Conference and Other Events

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.

Haiti Mission Trip

April 2016

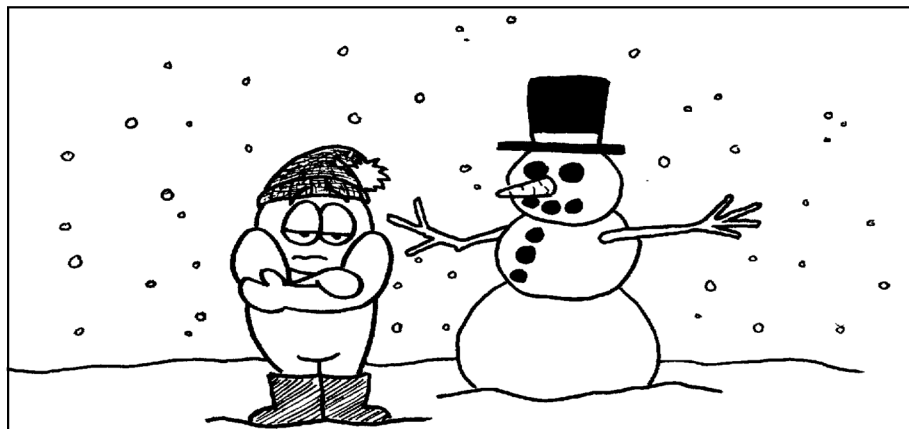
Mr. Art Sharkey and Mr. Mike Lawler of the Congregational Church of Westborough, will return to Haiti for their 3rd Mission Trip April 16-23, working with Heartline Ministries (website: <http://heartlineministries.org>). The estimated cost is \$1,800. The schedule will include working at the different 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>



**First Congregational Church
of Millbury, UCC**

148 West Main Street
Millbury, MA 01527

Address Correction Requested

The Beacon

**January
2016**



Worship and Church School: 10:00 a.m.
Rev. Carol Reynolds, Pastor
Church Phone: 508-865-9737
Email: Millbury1stChurch@gmail.com
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 Beacon

Deadline for the February issue is January 17th. 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.



To add an event, please email either Millbury1stchurch@gmail.com 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.

**January
2016**