



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 31 Issue 1 • January 2019

From the Pastor

Dear Friends,

Do you remember your baptism? Some of us do; many of us don't. We may remember someone else's baptism: the baptism of a grandchild, a niece, a nephew. One of my real joys as a pastor has been walking around the congregation with the baby right after the baptism, giving people in the pews a chance to see the child up close. Everyone is smiling! Everyone is happy! New life has come into our congregation!

Whether we are baptized as infants, teens, or adults, the sacrament of baptism signifies new life: a new birth into the life of the Christian church. Once we have been baptized, we do not need to be baptized again, even if we join a different church. But our faith can be refreshed and revitalized when we remember the vows that were spoken when we were baptized. Our identity as Christians can be strengthened when we renew those vows in worship.

This month, as we begin the New Year, we will celebrate our birth as Christians by renewing our baptismal vows. On Sunday, January 13, during worship, we will say together the words of hope and promise that were spoken at our baptism. This Sunday was chosen because church tradition designates it as Baptism of Jesus Sunday. In his gospel, Mark describes Jesus' baptism this way:

"Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and John baptized him in the Jordan River. While he was coming up out of the water, Jesus saw heaven splitting open and the Spirit, like a dove, coming down on him. And there was a voice from heaven, "You are my Son whom I dearly love, in you I find happiness" (Mark 1: 9 – 11).

Following the renewal of vows, you will have an opportunity to come forward and take a symbol of the waters of baptism that washed over Jesus; waters that remind us of the refreshing movement of God's Holy Spirit through our lives.



Yours in Christ,

Pastor Elva

SNOW CANCELLATION

From Pastor Elva



If a Sunday worship service has to be cancelled because of inclement weather, notice will be put on the answering machine message you hear when you call the church and also look for weather related cancellations on the following TV channels: Channel 4 (CBS WBZ-TV); Channel 5 (ABC WCVB-TV); Channel 7 (NBC WHDH-TV) and Channel 25 (FOX WFXT-TV).



January Birthdays

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 Alexis White
 26th Jeffrey Graveson
 28th Denise Rudge
 31st Cheryl Storer

Prayers & Concerns

† Our Community
 † Our Country
 † Our World
 † All Military Men and Women
 † All First Responders
 † Our Church and our Ministry in Millbury and beyond
 † Pastor Elva's brother Mike in California in treatment for an acoustic neuroma
 † Janice Fortin's friend, Nancy
 † Janice Fortin's friend Charlotte
 † Leah Murphy's friend Tina
 † Amy Peterson's great grandson Emmett



Chain of lights Thank You

This year Judy O'Connor offered us table space at the Millbury Senior Center for the Millbury Chain of Lights. Since the Chain comes right on the heels of the Turkey Raffle, we started out planning on baked goods, crafts and a possibly a raffle or two. As the date drew nearer we were fortunate to receive 3 unexpected donations. First a beautiful handmade quilt made by Gail Rocheford, second an original, framed watercolor by Michael Wackell, Sr. of Southpaw Watercolors and third another lovely handmade quilt by a friend of the church. These three items were put on Silent Auction, something we had never tried before. The three Silent Auction items brought in a total of \$330.00. The baked goods, crafts and knitted items amounted to \$124.00, giving us a total of \$454.00. Thanks to everyone who pitched in during this busy Holiday Season.

God Bless,
 Janice

Elmwood St. School Thank You

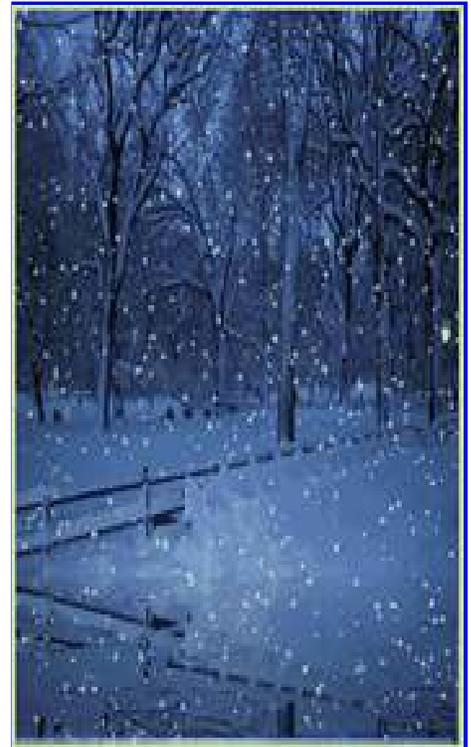
Elmwood St. School would like to express their heartfelt gratitude to our Church for all the wonderful gifts we provided for our assigned family. I also want to thank everyone for the white gifts that were provided. Our congregation is so very generous every year to help children have a special Christmas.



With gratitude,
 Deanna

Mission Corner

Just a reminder that our knitting/crocheting/loom group is in full swing. We are always looking for new people to join our group. We are working on baby hats and blankets for Visitation House in Worcester and winter hats for Elmwood St. School children in need. Both Visitation House and Elmwood St. School are worthy causes and the items we make are greatly appreciated. Please join us on **Tuesday evenings** at our church **6:30pm**. We have supplies for your use. Please let me know if you are interested. Deanna Murray 508-865-6069 or murrayapplegang@aol.com.



Come One, Come All to “Growing in the Spirit” Conversations!

Our world today is changing rapidly. Sometimes it seems as if the only thing we can be sure of, is that things will change. As a church, we find ourselves today in what is sometimes called the changing landscape of ministry. For example, church attendance is no longer a social requirement the way it was in the 1950s and 1960s. Shopping, sports, and just staying home with coffee and a bagel are all socially acceptable activities for a Sunday morning.

Also, unfortunately, churches are sometimes perceived to be hypocritical, moralistic, out of touch, and boring. Although we know that perception is false, if it's out there in the culture, we have to address it. We can't pretend those negative opinions don't exist. We have to change that perception by our words and our actions.

There is good news: people who don't attend church are often seeking spiritually. They are looking for acceptance and belonging. They are looking for a connection to the Holy. They are looking for tradition (but not traditionalism). Our church has a lot to offer those spiritual seekers. We can offer a welcome, acceptance, a helping hand. Our beautiful worship services can offer inspiration and encouragement.

Like many mainline Protestant churches (Methodist, Episcopalian, Lutheran, American Baptist, etc.) our church is facing challenges. But I believe we will thrive in the midst of these changing times if we are sure of our purpose. In consultation with the Deacons, I have created a process designed to help us grow into an understanding of our purpose by growing in the Spirit.

Beginning in late January, our congregation will embark on an exciting journey. We will devote time and energy to learning God's purpose for our church. This journey will begin with conversations about what has led us to be part of this church: what are the experiences that made us the people of faith we are today? We'll share our faith journeys, the ways we have felt God working in our lives, and the sacred moments when we have felt close to God, the difficult moments when we have felt distant from God. We'll share our questions and our hopes.

At this point our plan is to meet once a month after coffee hour. We will move from conversations about our faith journeys to other conversations, as we get a sense of where God is calling us today.

After Moses led them out of slavery in Egypt, the people of Israel, spent forty years in the wilderness before they entered the Promised Land (described in Exodus 12: 33 – 40: 38, and Numbers). As we make our journey, we may feel as if we're in the wilderness, not sure where we're going to end up. But we will step out in faith, trusting that God will guide us to an understanding of God's purpose for us.

Please make every effort to participate in these gatherings. A simple meal will be served. The gatherings will last one and a half hours at the longest.

With you on the journey,

Pastor Elva

SAVE THE DATE Fundraiser Paint Night

Sue Dion will be returning for another Fundraiser Paint Night. It will take place in Fellowship Hall at church, 148 West Main Street, Millbury as usual.

Tuesday, February 5, 2019, 6:30 PM

It's a great way to push those Winter Blahs away. Keep your eyes on Facebook, the church website and local newspapers for more details. Contact Janice Fortin at 508-826-6381 if you have any questions.



**First Congregational Church
of Millbury, UCC**
148 West Main Street
Millbury, MA 01527

Address Correction Requested



Worship and Church School: 10:00 a.m.
Church Phone: 508-865-9737
Email: Millbury1stChurch@gmail.com
Web: <http://millburyfirstchurch.com>



**Resolve to
make a
difference
in someone's life!**



To add an event, please
email
Millbury1stchurch@gmail.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 February
newsletter is January 20th.
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.



2019