

PASTOR'S RE-MESSAGE

As we eagerly await spring and a return to warmer weather and fresh, "earthy" air, our thoughts turn from an "inside" people to an "outside" people. Days spent in our yards and walking in the warmth of spring re-freshes and re-energizes us. We have the opportunity to be in God's natural world, recognizing the growth of flowers and bulbs, of trees and gardens, and we are reminded of the "freshness" of the moment.

Times like these moments of "re-freshment" are reminders for us. As we march toward spring, we also gather on our spiritual path to walk once again with Jesus on the way to the cross - to the "newness" of resurrection and life. Jesus used the forty days of what we now call Lent to proclaim the good news of God, even as that path led to his death. The season of Lent is filled with good news for us, news that we find in the most unlikely places.

~We are called to admit that we want to be re-connected to God. We walk that spiritual path with Jesus, even in dark places, because we know that God deeply cares for us in that wilderness.

~We re-call that God so loved the world that God gave His only begotten Son..." This is how much God loves us!

~We re-member that the "wilderness" of our lives has no limits or time frames but neither does God's love

~We are allowed to once again question God's love but know that God will always be there in our doubts and concerns.

~In the end, Jesus proclaimed the Good News of God. Once again, our walk through Lent, including - the Palm Sunday triumph and the Passion of Christ, His death on the cross and resurrection on Easter Sunday - all re-mind us of renewal of our Spirit of belonging!

I encourage you to join us in our observances of Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Easter Sunrise and Easter Services this year.

RE- NEW! RE-JOICE! RE-MEMBER!

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FIRST FOLKS

Congratulations and our very best wishes to great grandmother, **Eleanor Burton**; grandparents, **Jane & David Provencal**; parents, **Kirk & Patti Provencal**; and big sister, **Alyssa**, on the February 9th arrival of **Ryan Donald Provencal**.

A big thank you to **Kendra Surprenant** for donating her hair to "Locks of Love." This is a first for Kendra, and she was very proud to do it. She's also very happy with her new hairdo! Thank you, Kendra!

Get well wishes go to **Evelyn Lilley** who recently broke her ankle in a snowmobile accident. We hope you will be up and about soon, Evelyn!

We also send get well wishes to: **Janet Fifield**, who is recovering from cataract surgery; **Bill McDevitt**, who is recovering from a concussion; **Alfred Ducharme**, who underwent heart surgery on February 10th; **Darcie Forrestall**, who is recovering from gallbladder surgery.

Jean Robarge is currently looking for old calendars to use for an origami project she is working on for her quilters group. If you have any you would like to donate, you can leave them in the church office, or give them directly to Jean. Thank you!

Congratulations to **Amanda Andrews** who has received early acceptance at Bay State College in Boston for the Fall 2009 semester. Amanda plans to major in Entertainment Management. We're proud of you, Amanda!

BARNABUS' CORNER

Barnabus was the disciple who would travel the countryside and recognize the good work done by folks who often went unrecognized. In that spirit, we have established our Barnabus Corner here in CROSSWORD, recognizing behind the scene but important contributions to our church life and family.

Ed Scheibler & Sandy Ellis for clearing snow from roof and entryway after the snow storm on February 1st.

Wally Cibulski & Scott Andrews for helping our Youth Groups serve a delicious pancake breakfast on February 15th.

FAMILY FELLOWSHIP NEWS

DEAL A MEAL: On Saturday night February 7th, we held a new Family Fellowship program titled "Deal -A Meal". After a delicious pot luck supper, Cheryl Andrews, Ron Schneider and Rev. Bill auctioned off over 20 donated home cooked meals and desserts raising almost \$1400 for our church General Fund! All who attended agreed it was a great night of fun and fellowship, with a lot of competitive bidding on many of the food items. "Battles" over Desserts for a Year, a Lobster Clambake, an awesome Nantucket Pie Dinner with 6 courses, a Wine Tasting and so much more brought out the best of fellowship and bidding! With the great success of the program, all agreed that this is one program we will repeat next year! We thank our Deacons for sponsoring the evening!

On Saturday evening, March 14th, we will be holding our **2nd ANNUAL FUN-CERT TALENT**

NIGHT! Following a Pasta Dinner (cost is a donation to our Youth Fellowship programs) served by our Youth Fellowship groups and prepared under the supervision of Wally Cibulski, we invite all who would like to share their talents with the assembled crowd to please join in! Hosted by Wendy and Ken Henderson, last year's Talent Night set the bar high for a great evening of fellowship and entertainment! We expect the same this year. Poetry, storytelling, musical instruments, joke telling, etc, all are encouraged to sign up! There is a list in Fellowship Hall to help us schedule the acts! You can also call Ken and Wendy at 978 267-2091 or you may E-mail them at kenandwendyhenderson@comcast.net by March 8th. Please speak to Sue Howard if you need an accompanist. Don't miss out! If entertaining is not your thing, then come and be entertained!

FROM THE DIACONATE

Are you listening? Am I listening? Are we all listening? If it weren't for a willingness to listen, Saint Patrick's Christian missionary efforts nearly 1600 years ago would not have had nearly the significant an impact in our world. May you all enjoy a very Happy Saint Patrick's Day!! With those early Spring breezes coming upon us very soon, we should all keep our ears open for words of wisdom from our God.

Here are some highlights from February's Diaconate meeting:

- We have a full slate of members now, with the addition of Tom Wood and David Hardwick, who were nominated from the floor at the Annual Meeting. Welcome Tom and David!
- Thank you to everyone who participated in the Deal-A-Meal family fellowship event. It was a smashing success, bringing in over \$1400 for the church! We've heard nothing but positive comments about how much fun people had and are looking forward to the next one.
- Planning for Lenten services is in earnest. Of note to the congregation is that we will be having a simple supper on Maundy Thursday before the 7PM service;
- Goals for 2009 include transportation options for Sunday service for shut-ins, a possible Parish Nurse Program, and Outreach/Caregiving initiatives.

Prayer List

Please help us keep the prayer list current. You may contact Rev Bill or Peggy to let them know when someone needs to be added or removed from the list or needs a visit or call from Rev Bill.

Worship Coordinators & Greeters

The Worship Coordinators for March are Jane Provencal and Bob Diack. Our greeters for Sunday service are members of the Pastor Parish Relations Committee.

Our next Diaconate meeting is Tuesday, March 10th at 7PM. Please feel to drop by if you are interested in attending and would like to learn more about the Diaconate. As always, please feel free to contact a member of the Diaconate with any questions, comments, or suggestions.

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Many thanks to everyone who supported our bake sale on February 22nd. We raised \$201.00, which will be used towards our mission projects.

FROM OUR MISSION COMMITTEE

It is with much excitement and anticipation that First Congregational Church of Pelham has established a Mission Committee to explore, coordinate and plan mission opportunities for the congregation on a local, national and international scale. The newly developed committee includes, Doug Hjorth, who will serve as Chair, Bob Diack, who will serve as the liaison between the Diaconate and the Mission Committee, and members Deb Calabro, Alma Healey, Ed Yourtee and Maureen Ferguson. An additional youth member is currently being sought.

A few of the committee's short term goals over the next several months will be to:

- create a mission statement for the committee;
- organize and coordinate mission projects throughout the church by developing a calendar of events/projects;
- develop a comprehensive communication system to educate and encourage participation in mission opportunities, including posting minutes of meetings; bulletin board displays, monthly newsletter articles and mission moments, website updates and visits by representatives from various mission organizations that our church supports;
- investigate current projects/program to assure fiscal responsibility, reduce duplication of efforts and track donations and giving; and
- provide opportunities for hands on mission opportunities.

The committee encourages you to share with them your ideas and concerns regarding our church's missions so that we can meet the wishes of our church family.

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

On Sunday, March 22nd our church will reach out to our members in the name of Christ by holding a special offering for **One Great Hour of Sharing** (OGHS). A UCC Wider Church Ministries special offering, providing funding for humanitarian needs, which include the following:

-Building sustainable communities. OGHS supports self-help programs in more than 80 nations to build sustainable communities that enable people and communities to stand against and rise above hunger, disease, illiteracy, and other forces of injustice that deny and destroy dignity.

-Responding to disaster. OGHS provides emergency and long-term assistance to people in the aftermath of hurricanes, tornados, storms, floods, tidal waves, fires, explosions, technological disasters, civil strife, war, or other natural or human-caused events. On average,

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OGHS responds to a disaster once every 2.5 days.

-Ministering to refugees. OGHS responds with advocacy and help, hope and hospitality for people who have been uprooted from their home of origin.

By following Jesus' example to give help to the poor, nourishment to the hungry, liberation to the captives, healing to the sick, and justice to the oppressed, regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, age, disability, or any other characteristic, OGHS demonstrates faithfulness and participates in God's work of loving and healing the world. On Sunday March 22nd, please consider a generous donation to the OGHS offering. Envelopes can be found with the Sunday bulletin.

Special thanks and appreciation to all those who donated to the Souper Bowl of Caring collection held on Sunday, February 1st. \$252.55 and 126 non-perishable food items were collected and donated to the Pelham Food Pantry. The Souper Bowl of Caring is the nation's largest youth-led weekend of giving and serving, the purpose is to provide young people with the ability to serve and

lead their communities in helping others. This year 11,399 groups participated in the Souper Bowl of Caring and earned \$9,109,492 to end hunger and poverty. Thank you to Ron Schneider for coordinating and bringing this worthy cause to the church.

WHAT IS LENT ALL ABOUT?

Lent, in our Christian denomination, is the forty-day-long liturgical season of fasting and prayer before Easter. The forty days represent the time Jesus spent in the desert, where according to the Bible he endured temptation. This word initially simply meant “spring” and derives from the Germanic root for “long” because in the spring the days visibly lengthen.

The purpose of Lent is the preparation of the believer—through prayer, penitence, almsgiving and self-denial—for the annual commemoration during Holy Week of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus, which recalls the events linked to the Passion of Christ and culminates in Easter, the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday (February 25) and concludes on Holy Saturday. The six Sundays in Lent are not counted among the forty days because each Sunday represents a "mini-Easter", a celebration of Jesus' victory over sin and death.

The number forty has many Biblical references: the forty days Moses spent on Mount Sinai with God (Exodus 24:18); the forty days and nights Elijah spent walking to Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:8); God made it rain for forty days and forty nights in the days of Noah (Genesis 7:4); the Hebrew people wandered forty years traveling to the Promised Land (Numbers 14:33); Jonah in his prophecy of judgment gave the city of Nineveh forty days in which to repent (Jonah 3:4).

Jesus retreated into the desert, where he fasted for forty days, and was tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1-2, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-2). Jesus overcame all three temptations remembering God's love for him and he began his ministry.

It is the traditional belief that Jesus lay for forty hours in the tomb which led to the forty hours of total fast that preceded the Easter celebration in the early Church (the biblical reference to 'three days in the tomb' is understood as spanning three days, from Friday afternoon to early Sunday morning, rather than three 24 hour periods of time).

Many modern Protestants consider the observation of Lent to be a choice, rather than an obligation. They may decide to give up a favorite food or drink (e.g. chocolate, alcohol) or activity (e.g., going to the movies, playing video games, etc.) for Lent, or they may instead take on a Lenten discipline such as devotions, volunteering for charity work, and so on.

There are several holy days within the season of Lent. Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent in Western Christianity.

The sixth Lenten Sunday, commonly called Palm Sunday, marks the beginning of Holy Week, the final week of Lent immediately preceding Easter.

Thursday is known as Maundy Thursday, or Holy Thursday, and is a day Christians commemorate the Last Supper shared by Christ with his disciples (April 9).

Good Friday follows the next day, on which Christians remember His crucifixion and burial.

Holy Week and the season of Lent, depending on denomination and local custom, end with Easter Vigil at sundown on Holy Saturday or on the morning of Easter Sunday (April 12). It is custom for some churches to hold sunrise services which include open air

celebrations in some places.

STEEPLETOPICS

The children will be returning from their winter vacation on March 2nd and getting back into their classroom routines. They all enjoyed Valentine's Day and will be looking forward to seeing what tricks the special leprechaun has in store for us around St. Patrick's Day! Some dates to remember are Teacher Workshop day for Pelham is March 10th. Steepletop was going to close on this day, along with the public school but since we have missed so many days due to snow, Steepletop will be open!! The Kindergarten classes will be going on a field trip to UMass Lowell to see Seussville on March 18th and we are all excited to have Judy Pancoast with us for an in house field trip on March 20th.

Steepletop has been offering a computer class for kids run by Imagine Tomorrow. If you are interested in signing your child up please contact Imagine Tomorrow at (603)898-3300.

We are continuing to accept registrations for the 2009-2010 school year. If you have a child who will be 3 years old by December 31st or 4 or 5 years old by September 30th and are interested in enrollment for the Fall, please call the school at (603)635-2100 and leave a message for the Registrar.

**Submitted by,
*Melanie Surprenant***

DAFFODIL SUNDAY ~ 2009

Get ready for spring by ordering a bouquet of beautiful daffodils to support the American Cancer Society. We all know someone, or have ourselves, been touched by cancer. Together we can make a difference!

We invite you to join us in this opportunity to purchase the flowers at our church. The price is \$10.00 per bunch of 10 daffodils. The American Cancer Society is also offering a special 10" Limited Edition Boyd's Daffodil Bear with its own bunch of 10 fresh daffodils for \$25.00 and 3 potted multi-stemmed bulbs for \$15.00.

Quantities are limited and orders are accepted on a first come, first serve basis. Please use the order form below and return it to the office with your payment at your earliest convenience.

Your flowers will be available for you to pick up the morning of March 22nd, Daffodil Sunday.

I wish to order #_____ bunches of Daffodils @ \$10.00 per bunch.

I wish to order #_____ Limited Edition Boyd's Daffodil Bear with its own bunch of 10 fresh daffodils for \$25.00 per set.

I wish to order #_____ pots of Daffodil bulbs @ \$15.00 per pot.

Name: _____

Total Enclosed: _____