***April 2018 Newsletter***

**First Congregational Church**

**An Open & Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ**

**300 Central Street, Saugus, MA 01906**

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**Rev. Martha Leahy, Pastor Rebecca Harrold, Music Director Carolyn Davis, Church Secretary**

[**https://www.Facebook.com/uccsaugus**](https://www.Facebook.com/uccsaugus)

**“Go into the world and preach the good news to all creation.”**

***Jesus in the Gospel of Mark 16:15***

**REV. MARTHA’S MESSAGE**



**I love this sending-forth blessing Jesus gives his disciples.** He appeared to them after his resurrection, kind of perturbed that they didn’t believe him all along – that he would die but rise again from the tomb.

**Jesus spent a lot of time in the gospels trying to explain his unorthodox approach to ministry.** He urged his disciples to reach out to people quite unlike themselves. He sat down to eat with outcasts that his disciples preferred to stay 10 yards away from. **He pleaded with them to tell, tell, tell the story, especially after he was gone.** What exhausting work it must have been for him! And how tired the disciples must have been following him, day after day, to places far and wide.

**But Jesus modeled the work of the church to come.** He didn’t say, “Stay inside this nice, safe sanctuary and maybe people will come to you.” No, he said, “Go into the world and preach the good news to all creation.” That, my friends, is Jesus’ command and our marching orders.

In this post-Easter season, let’s consider how we can “preach the good news” according to our gifts. How we can feed the hungry, comfort the grieving, love the hard-to-love. **As one saint said, “Preach the gospel always; when necessary, use words.”** In all these ways, we will certainly be “preaching the good news” in this Easter season!

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**FROM OUR MUSIC DIRECTOR**

I am rejoicing in the development of our **Choir**.

Joyful singing and happy hearts have been greeting me on Sunday mornings for which I am truly grateful. We are stronger in our collective contribution to building a spirit-filled community when we pull together for a common purpose.

What better purpose than to make **MUSIC** together!

Singing is one of the most powerful ways to transform the heart – those of our listeners and of own.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your

inspired and joyful singing!

With Love and Music,

Rebecca Harrold

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**FROM THE DEACONS**

**Terri Leander** is Deacon for the month of April.

I’m sure we are all looking forward to the spring and warmer weather. It will be easier for everyone to get to church. We can all take a little rest after the busy Easter season.

Rev. Leahy will be taking the Sunday after Easter off. **John Gilmore** will be filling in for her and leading the service on April 8th.

We will be having the **“Making It Real**” **workshop and pot luck lunch on Sunday, April 29th** after church in the community hall. This is a free session run by the UCC. This will better help us to see the future vision of our church. There will be an attendance sheet and sign up for what you can hopefully bring to the pot luck lunch. We hope many of us can attend. The more ideas we have the more we can help our church.

Your Deacons,

Barbara Davis, Terri Leander, John Gilmore, Susan Dunn, Rick Florentino, Mike Mascovitz

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**HEIFER HAPPENINGS....**

We are quickly approaching Easter as I write this. Spring is here and waiting to be sprung. And it is time once again for our **Heifer fundraising campaign.**

I'm bursting with excitement! **Beginning April 8th, I will be collecting donations of any amount**, whatever one feels they can contribute for the purchasing of animals to donate to poverty stricken families all over the world. In doing this, we are assisting in creating a sustainable income and by-products to feed families, provide wool for warm blankets and clothing, manure for crops and animals used to transport goods to market or for help on the small farm.

As a reminder, **the donation of one animal multiples**, because Heifer requires that the first female offspring is passed on to another needy member of the community. The original gift of one animal or flock is passed on at least **9 times**. To date, I believe Heifer has helped raise **3 million people** out of poverty and dramatically improved the quality of lives for so many individuals as well as whole communities. These donations work within communities providing education and medical treatment. It especially works to empower women and single mothers who are typically the most in need.

In 2016, we collected $150. In 2017, we collected $750 and, with the match by Heifer, the dollar amount was doubled to $1500. **What can we raise for 2018?** The sky is the limit - a cow, a water buffalo, honeybees, a llama, a trio of rabbits, sheep, goats, a pig?? Think of the possibilities!!! Let's reach for the stars!

I love the work that we do through Heifer. I know you all do too. Pray on what you can afford to donate and may God's blessings be with you, now and always.

Yours in Christ,

TerriLeander

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****THE HEALING CIRCLE**

**1st & 3rd Wednesdays, 7-8PM**

***“The Root of Healing is in the Power of the Circle”***

Need a soul-vacation in the middle of your week? Join us twice a month to practice meditation, pray, and find peace and renewal for the week to come.

Private, one-on-one healing prayer is offered at the end of the Circle. You can also make appointments for additional conversation. Find us on Facebook!

<https://www.facebook.com/healingcirclesaugus>

**Mapping Out a Church Vision**

**Workshop and Luncheon**

**Sunday, April 29, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM**

We are pleased to announce the MACUCC is presenting a free **visioning session** for us as part of their “Making It Real” Campaign. We will meet following the worship service, have a potluck lunch, and then be led in a visioning session by two UCC volunteers.

**What is the purpose of this campaign?** According to the UCC, “God has a purpose for every church in our Association and Conference. We also wonder if every one of our congregations is clear about what that purpose is! What we do know is that our most alive churches are the ones who have a clear sense of the ‘why’ of their existence.”

**Do any of these statements describe our church?**

* seeking some new or refreshed sense of purpose in the community
* finding it hard to devote energy to thinking about the future
* paying bills taking precedence over renewing ministries
* hitting a wall with finding willing volunteers to do traditional tasks
* feeling left behind by other churches who seem to be thriving

Through the years, our church has had many conversations and heard many laments about the **dwindling size of our congregation**. “Making It Real” may help us discern a way to remain a vital, healthy church that serves a great spiritual purpose in our community.

Sound good? **Please sign the attendance sheet** in Community Hall and, if you can, a dish you would be willing to bring for **lunch**. We’ll worship together, have lunch at 11, and then get started with the workshop at 11:30. See Rev. Martha or a Deacon with any questions. Working together, we can begin the revitalization necessary to keep our church here for a very long time.

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**PRAYER SHAWLS**

Stephen Soldano believes in the ministry of prayer shawls. So much so that **he has crocheted over** **3,000** of them for patients at Mass General’s Cancer Center. Soldano, who is legally blind, began creating shawls after the 2009 death of a good friend being treated at MGH. He made 162 shawls that year, one for every infusion nurse who cared for his friend.

**Shawls are blessed in a ceremony** at MGH Chapel, in the same way we blessed ours here on Palm Sunday (see picture below). We hope that you or anyone you know who can knit or crochet will help us keep plenty of shawls in stock to give to those who need an extra measure of comforting prayers.

**You can see a special Stephen Soldano creation** here on Easter morning, brought to us by Jon Autiello, who was blessed to meet Stephen in person.



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| **April 2018** |
|  | **Monday** | **Tuesday** | **Wednesday** | **Thursday** | **Friday** | **Saturday** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1 **EASTER**Sunrise Service 6AMBreakfast 6:30AMWorship & Communion 10AM | **2**Trustees 5:45PMN.A. 7PM | **3** Chair Yoga 9:30AMYoga 6:30PM | **4**Office Open 2-5PMHealing Circle 7PM | **5**Office Closed | **6**  | 7 |
| 8 Worship10AMWorship leaders John Gilmore & Lisa Merschen Heifer Kick-OffSunday SchoolChurch Council  | **9**N.A. 7PM | **10**Chair Yoga 9:30AMYoga 6:30PM | **11**Saugus Clergy 12nOffice Open 2-5PMDivorce Support 7-10 | **12** Office Open 10-3Staff 10AMBible 1PM | **13** | 14 |
| 15 Worship 10AMSunday School  | **16**N.A. 7PM | **17**Chair Yoga 9:30AMYoga 6:30PM | **18**Office Open 2-5PMDeacons 5:30PMHealing Circle 7PM | **19**Office Open 10-3Staff 10AMBible 1PMMasons NightRev. Martha preaches at First Baptist 7PM | **20** | **21** |
| 22 Worship 10AM Sunday School | **23**N.A. 7PM | **24**Chair Yoga 9:30AMYoga 6:30PM | **25**Office Open 2-5PMDivorce Support 7-10 | **26**Office Open 10-3Staff 10AMBible 1PM | **27** | **28**Saugus Vietnam Vets 50th Anniversary 7PM |
| 29Worship 10AM Sunday SchoolMaking It Real Workshop & Lunch | **30**N.A. 7PM |  |  |  |  | **May 5****Masons Blood Drive w/breakfast for donors** |