***January 2018 Newsletter***

**First Congregational Church**

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

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

**781-233-3028**

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

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

**“I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I,**

**whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”**

*John the Baptist speaking of Jesus, Gospel of Matthew 3:11*

**REV. MARTHA’S MESSAGE**



**God works in mysterious ways**, sometimes in a refreshing breeze and sometimes in a ball of fire. Certainly God does not cause floods, fires, or any other disasters to befall us; rather, God looks for us to make meaning out of whatever happens, and to find a nugget of wisdom in our response.

**On December 8 our church building suffered what might be the worst disaster** in its history since it was built in 1852. Flames started in pallets stored behind the church and quickly enveloped the shed and the southern rear wall of the church. If it were not for the quick 911 calls of passers-by and our neighbors, and the rapid response of the Saugus Fire Department, we would have lost the building.

But the building is still standing and we are still a congregation.

**So, what meaning do we make of the fire?** What went through our minds when we heard the news? What does the church mean to us? What did we almost lose? Do we have a new appreciation of who we are and what we called to do?

Finally, we need to take some time to figure out **our response to the young person** charged with setting the fire. It would be healing to be able to have a conversation with them and to have our **“Why?**” question answered. And then what? According to Jesus, we are to forgive another up to **77 times!** (Mt 18:22) He also said, “If anyone of you is without sin, let them **cast the first stone**.” (Jn 8:7) These are hard teachings to which our first response may be, “Yes, but in this case….”

**There is a great lesson we can teach** this young person and the Saugus community about who we really are and what kind of church we have been baptized into. We have this opportunity to practice in real life what we say we believe in church. Let’s set aside a time to talk soon to air our fears and our hopes about what happened and move forward together in faith and hope.

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**Introducing**

**our New Music Director**

**Rebecca Harrold**

Rebecca hales from Mentor, Ohio and is a Singer, Musician and Composer. Presently she holds the position as **Lead Pianist for Boston Ballet’s Marblehead Studio**. She has played in the pit orchestra for **The Company Theater**, accompanied the **Voice Studio of Robert Honeysucker**, and has played for **Burklyn Ballet of Vermont**. She has had the privilege of working with **Stephen Schwartz**as principle pianist for the *IRNE* award-winning production of “*The Baker’s Wife”* by way of her affiliation with Company Theater.

Rebecca is classically trained with a **degree in Vocal Music Performance**, and has sung in diverse styles from classical to acapella, rock and gospel. **Her premiere CD “The River of Life”** was produced with Grammy Award winning director, producer, composer, **William Ackerman**(**Windham Hill fame**) and has been successfully making waves in Australia/ Asia along with her independently produced video for the title track featuring the local talents of *Melissa Reed* (dancer) and *Kevin Jenkins* (choreographer). In 2017, her **music video for “The River of Life”** was performed live at the Massachusetts General Hospital Gala Fundraiser for research into Frontal Temporal Dementia and was the Main Event of the nights Fundraising Gala.

**“Church Musician”** has always been a significant role for Rebecca, as she was raised on gospel music as well as contemporary Christian music. She has played with hundreds of churches across the country and has taken the advice of spiritual leaders of ALL denominations to just “sing and play for the Lord”. **Talk to her about how you can add your talents to our music program.**

For more about Rebecca, visit her website <http://rebeccaharroldmusic.com/>.

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**FROM THE DEACONS**

**Rick Florentino** is the deacon for the month of January.

Church worship was quiet due to the fire, but **Christmas Eve** was a perfect day to get back to our own sanctuary and our own church family. Even though the folks at **East Saugus Methodist Church** were gracious hosts, I think we can all agree it’s good to be home.

**Unfortunately, we still cannot use the Community Hall for coffee hour.** Hopefully we will be back there soon for coffee and fellowship.

After the fire, we were contacted by **Old South Union Church UCC in Weymouth,** who had suffered a fire similar to ours 30 years ago. They completely understood what we were feeling and they asked us if they could send a donation. When Rev. Martha told them the Deacons were short on funds this Christmas to buy our annual gift of grocery store gift cards for needy kids at a local elementary school, Old South offered to send us **twice** the amount we normally gave. So, the fire succeeded in bringing together two UCC churches to help hungry kids in our community. What an unexpected gift!

The Deacons would like to thank **John Gilmore** for filling in for Rev. Martha while she was on vacation on 12/31/17. His sermon was uplifting to start the new year.

It is time to take down our **Christmas decorations**. The plan is to do it in **Sunday 1/7**. We are looking for help from those who can stay after church.

As always, we need people to volunteer for **greeters, ushers and scripture readers, and coffee hour** in a couple of weeks.

Stay warm. I think January is going to be a cold month.

Your Board of Deacons,

Barbara Davis, Terri Leander, Rick Florentino,

Susan Dunn, Mike Mascovitz

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**HEIFER NEWS UPDATE**

Greetings and a most happy and blessed New Year!

**I just want to congratulate and thank you** all for your generous donations to Heifer Project. We've had a great year in our efforts toward alleviating hunger and poverty in our world.

I would like to recap where we were when we began and how far we've come. After Heifer was resurrected in 2016, we raised a total of $150 with our **Pennies Please campaign**. That was a good start.

In April and May of 2017, we set our sights much higher. We decided to try to raise $500 to

buy a cow. Not only did we collect that, but we raised a total of $750. At that time, Heifer Project with the aid of a generous donor, doubled our donation for a total of **$1500!** As you may remember, I was out of my mind with excitement and you all rejoiced with me.

On Dec. 30, 2017, I saw a post on Facebook that for a limited time **donations were being tripled.** Too good to be true and not to take advantage of! With the small gathering at church on Sunday, Dec. 31, we managed to collect $100 spontaneously. And with the donation tripled, that was a donation of **$300!** With our most recent donation, we were able to purchase a llama for its wool in the colder weather, a trio of rabbits which provide rich fertilizer for crops, 2 sets of honeybees, hives and training, a flock of chicks, a flock of ducks and a flock of geese!

And lest we need reminding, **Heifer is the gift that keeps on giving.** The gifts get passed on and

on to other members of the community, providing necessities to live, food and a sustainable

income. That in turn provides education, medical assistance as well as other ways to help better

the quality of living in the communities we assist.

**Let's make 2018 another banner year for**

**Heifer!** We will do more fundraising and set our sights a little higher. And I’ll be on the lookout

for double and triple donations again. As we move into this new year, stay tuned for our Heifer Project Fundraisers!

Blessings, Peace and Gratitude,

Terri Leander

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**TRUSTEES NEWS**

**The Trustees have been working non-stop** since Dec. 8, meeting with insurance adjustors, fire department personnel, electricians, plumbers, and National Grid, and overseeing the many workers on-site who were cleaning up after the fire. They were instrumental in moving up the pace of the clean-up so that we could **celebrate Christmas Eve in our sanctuary.**  There is still repair work to be done in **Community Hall and the kitchen**, which may take a week or two more. In the meantime, our Narcotics Anonymous group can meet, but it is not safe enough or clean enough to serve food in there, or for the yoga class to meet. Very soon we will be back to normal and ready to gather after church to be with our friends.

Many people have expressed interest in having a **celebratory meal** after the hall is done and inviting the firefighters who saved our church. If you have an idea as to how and when we can do this, let one of the Trustees know (Brenton Spencer, Steve Rich, Carolyn Davis, Paul Zaniboni, Carl Spencer, Scott Davis). In this way, we can let Saugus know how grateful we are for the outpouring of support we have received. We are truly a blessed congregation!

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****THE HEALING CIRCLE**

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

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

[www.facebook.com/healingcirclesaugus](http://www.facebook.com/healingcirclesaugus)

**Inner peace is the new success story!!!** To achieve inner peace you need to quiet the mind. We quiet our minds at our Sacred Circle with meditation and grounding work.

**Meditation** has been scientifically proven to change how our brains work for the better. Medically it has been proven to be a useful healing tool when recovering from all kinds of medical conditions or in a long-term manner to control all kinds of issues. More and more research is coming out in favor of meditation and all the benefits that come with it.

**The good news is that you don’t have to do it for hours and hours.** Ten minutes a day can help; 20 minutes is even better. Stress is relieved and your health improves. There are different types and techniques of meditation that can be done to achieve these benefits. This is what we practice in an effort to help all who come to our Healing Circle.

Come to our Circle and find out what works best for you and experience the fellowship and peace that will follow. Curious? Email Cindy Turco at cynturco@aol.com or speak to Rev. Martha.

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**ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING**

**Sunday, 1/21/18 @11:30AM**

In the Congregational tradition, church members are the backbone of all church activities – spiritual, financial, and communal. Congregationalists were the first in our country to practice democracy, and our form of governance inspired our country’s founders to build a Constitution around our concept of “one person, one vote.” Everything we do is voted on by our membership – expenditures, budgets, even calling pastors and staffpersons and renewing (or not) their yearly contracts.

**If you are the Chairperson of a committee or board, please email your annual report by Fri., 1/14 to Church Clerk Greta Zaniboni at** **greta.zaniboni@gmail.com****. If we can all meet that deadline, we can have copies of the finished report ready for distribution on Sun., 1/17, a week before the meeting.**

All church attendees are invited to this meeting, however only church members will be allowed to vote. Come hear about our challenges and accomplishments in 2017 and what we have to look forward to in 2018. Come add your voice to the conversation. It’s our right and our privilege.

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**THANK YOU FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL**

**“CHRISTMAS BLESSING BAGS”**

*Here is a letter we received from the Grace Center in Gloucester thanking us for a special Christmas gift we delivered to them.*

Dear Members of First Congregational Church,

We greatly appreciate your in-kind donation of 12 blessing bags and feminine products received on Dec. 12, 2017.

Thanks to your support, the Grace Center offers warmth, nourishment, and access to essential services for those in our community whose lives are in crisis. We can give this hope and sustenance to our guests because of caring people like you who contribute their time, talent, and treasure. For this we are most grateful.

Thank you so much for your wonderful generosity – your support is helping to save lives.

With gratitude for abundant grace,

Rev. Alice W. Erickson

Assistant Treasurer

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| **January 2018** |
|  | **Monday** | **Tuesday** | **Wednesday** | **Thursday** | **Friday** | **Saturday** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|   | **1****New Year’s Day**N.A. 7PM | **2**Chair Yoga 9:30AMYoga 6:30PM | **3**Office Open 12-5PMHealing Circle 7PM | **4**Office Open 10-3Staff 10:30AMBible Study 1-2PM | **5**  | 6Yoga 9-10AM |
| 7 1 EpiphanyBaptism of JesusWorship & Communion 10AMSunday School | **8**Trustees 5:45PMN.A. 7PM | **9**Chair Yoga 9:30AMYoga 6:30PM | **10**Saugus Clergy 12nOffice Open 2-5PMDivorce Support 7-10  | **11**Office Open 10-3Staff 10:30AMBible Study 1-2PM | **12****Annual Reports due to Church Clerk** | 13Yoga 9-10AM |
| 14 2 EpiphanyWorship 10AMSunday SchoolChurch Council  | **15**MLK Jr Day N.A. 7PM | **16**Chair Yoga 9:30AMYoga 6:30PM | **17**Office Open 12-5Healing Circle 7PM | **18**Office Open 10-3Staff 10:30AMBible Study 1-2PMMasons Night | **19** | **20**Yoga 9-10AM |
| 213 EpiphanyWorship 10AMSunday School**Annual Congregational Meeting 11:30** | **22**N.A. 7PM | **23**Chair Yoga 9:30AMYoga 6:30PM | **24**Office Open 10-3Divorce Support 7-10  | **25**Office Open 10-3Staff 10:30AMBible Study 1-2PM | **26** | **27**Yoga 9-10AM |
| 28 4 EpiphanyWorship 10AMSunday School  | **29**N.A. 7PM | **30**Chair Yoga 9:30AMYoga 6:30PM | **31**Office Open 10-3 |  |  |  |

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| **February 2018** |
|  | **Monday** | **Tuesday** | **Wednesday** | **Thursday** | **Friday** | **Saturday** |
|  |  |  |  | **1**Office Open 10-3Staff 10:30AMBible Study 1PM | **2** | 3Yoga 9-10AM |
| 4 5 EpiphanyWorship & Communion 10AMSunday School  | **5**Trustees 5:45PMN.A. 7PM | **6**Chair Yoga 9:30AMYoga 6:30PM | **7**Saugus Clergy 12nOffice Open 12-5PMHealing Circle 7PM | **8**Office Open 10-3Staff 10AMBible Study 1PM | **9** | 10Yoga 9-10AM |
| 11 6 EpiphanyWorship10AMSunday SchoolChurch Council  | **12**N.A. 7PM | **13**Chair Yoga 9:30AMYoga 6:30PM | **14****Ash Wednesday****“Ashes to Go” 3-5PM**Office Open 12-3PMDivorce Support 7-10 | **15**Office Open 10-3Staff 10AMBible Study 1PMMasons Night | **16** | 17Yoga 9-10AM |
| 18 **1st Sunday in Lent**Worship 10AMSunday School | **19**Presidents’ Day N.A. 7PM | **20**Chair Yoga 9:30AMYoga 6:30PM | **21**Office Open 12-5PMHealing Circle 7PM | **22**Office Open 10-3Staff 10AMBible Study 1PM | **23** | **24**Yoga 9-10AM |
| 25 **2nd Sunday in Lent**Worship 10AMSunday School  | **26**N.A. 7PM | **27**Chair Yoga 9:30AMYoga 6:30PM | **28**Office Open 10-3Divorce Support 7-10 |  |  |  |