

March, 2018

FRIENDLY MESSENGER

First Congregational Church, 1070 Pleasant Street, Worcester, MA 01602
www.fcc-worcester.org · Office: 508-752-4635 · Parsonage: 508-459-9085



A Word from Rev. Jackson

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As winter draws to a close and we stand on the verge of spring, we can thank God for bringing us through the cold winter months. Before long, the pussy willows will be out, snow drop flowers will appear, and crocuses will start to pop through the ground. This past Sunday, February 18th, we all woke up to 5-6 inches of snow. My children's sermon was about God still working even though we can't see what He is doing. Nature is still working under the blanket of snow. So many times we respond to God like the disciple Thomas said to Jesus in *John 20:25* ("So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.'")

What keeps us from believing even when Jesus is standing right in front of us? Maybe it's a history of human disappointments. Perhaps it's the Devil doing what he does best: planting seeds of doubt and fear in the hearts of Christians. Too often we are prone to sink into a litany of "what ifs?" instead of "why nots?"

A full week later Jesus returns, and Thomas touches Him. Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!". (*John 20:28*). I believe that when we enter God's Kingdom after leaving this earth, many will be proclaiming the same words when we see the big picture. Perhaps the Lenten message for us and our church is this: (*John 20:29*) "Then Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'"

In the spring, we have sung the hymn, "In the Bulb There Is a Flower." These words pretty much capture my message... especially as we leave the winter season:

In the Bulb There Is a Flower Natalie Sleeth

*In the seed, an apple tree;
in cocoons, a hidden promise;
butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter
there's a spring that waits to be,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.*

*There's a song in every silence,
seeking word and melody;
there's a dawn in every darkness
bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future;
what it holds, a mystery,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.*

*In our end is our beginning;
in our time, infinity;
in our doubt, there is believing;
in our life, eternity.*

*In our death, a resurrection;
at the last, a victory,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.*

During the coming month and throughout the Lenten season, enrich your Lenten experience by looking for the signs of spring. Absorb the evidence that God is still working and doing great things under the snow cover. May we keep our eyes on Jesus and His word over these next few weeks. May we arrive at Passion week more sensitized and spiritually ready to receive the Easter message.

See you in church! Because He lives!

Rev. Bob

FRIENDLY MESSENGER DEADLINE:

The *hard and fast cut-off* date for the April issue is Tuesday, March 20th. If your article(s) aren't in by that date, we'll be happy to include it (them) in our May, 2018 issue. Thank you!

A Clarification

Last month, I listed four hours during the week when anyone could drop by to see me without having to make an appointment. Unfortunately, some may have misinterpreted this to mean that this is the only time I'm in the office. This is not the case. My general schedule during the week is 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., Tuesday through Fridays, with Mondays as my day off. Not all of these hours are spent in my church office. This time is used for counseling, visitations, committee and staff meetings, and UCC commitments. Throughout the week, time is set aside for reading, study, sermon and worship preparation, and prayer. Each week is different. Saturdays are also set aside for final worship and sermon preparation. Sundays are for worship, fellowship, and church committee meetings.

I have always considered the ordained ministry to be a 24/7 calling. I'm usually only a phone call away and welcome and enjoy the opportunities to meet with people either at the church or in their homes. I try to keep an open door schedule because ministry needs often don't fit into a schedule.

As we move ahead together in our mutual ministries, I hope that each of you will always feel welcome to be in touch. The spiritual health of our congregation is of primary importance to me, and, again, I hope you'll always feel free to visit or contact me at any time.

Thank you, *Rev. Bob*

Bulletin Cover Donations

If you'd be interested in donating a Sunday bulletin cover for a special occasion, please stop in the office to pick one out from one of the many flyers we have available. The cost is only \$12!

March Birthdays

06	Charlotte Perry
11	Susan Anderson
11	Melissa Castle
18	Annalise McGrail
28	Ellen Dalbeck

Laundry Love



The collection deadline is Sunday, March 4th, in order to be included in this month's delivery. February totals were 11 jugs of detergent, 6 bottles of sanitizers, 1 activity packet, and 12 assorted toiletries.

It's still winter on the calendar, and pocket sanitizers and hand creams are in great need as they continue to be a luxury to many. Dryer sheets and items for the zip first-aid bags are an on-going request.

Please leave your donations **UNDER** the bubble display in the Narthex, anytime you are at church, to be included in the next delivery.

Coupon Collection

The box in the Narthex needs some attention! Let's fill it up before it's delivered to Sally for clipping and sorting.

Look for the box with the Red Poppy and drop in your tops and labels.

Pastoral Relations

The committee met with Pastor Bob on Sunday, February 4th, for our first work session of the new year. In keeping to our commitment to always work as a team, one member was on speaker phone for the entire meeting.

Our focus was to track any progress since our December meeting, to relay any of the congregation's suggestions or comments, and to set goals for our next meeting.

Thanks to a unanimous vote of the Fellowship, Pastor Bob has a new, easier-to-work mic which he's using on Sundays, with positive feedback from our members; much easier to hear and understand him as he moves about the sanctuary. Also, thanks to Scott for finding the equipment that is compatible with our sound system.

Another request by our church family was connecting/introducing the gospel reading before his sermon. Pastor Bob is doing so, and, again, your comments show how much you appreciate this added background.

Communication in many areas of life here at First Church is at the center of several requests that have come to us and are at the top of the goals and objectives for our next meeting.

We thank the pastor for becoming part of our team in following through on your request as we continue to improve on availability, openness, and involvement with the community. That said, our committee goal remains: *What's Best for Our Church*.

Continue to use the comment box in the Narthex or office, or speak to any team member at any time.

Sheila Ansley, Theresa Andes, Ashley Rucinski, and Linda Ann Coy

From Nick the Church Mouse

They say St. Patrick drove the snakes from Ireland. I'm glad he didn't drive out the church mice too! May the sun shine all day long, everything go right and nothing wrong. May those you love bring love back to you, and may all the wishes you wish come true. Irish blessings to my church family!

Nick "McMouse"

From Hospitality

Anyone wishing to bring in treats for Sunday Coffee Hour through the end of 2018, please sign up in the Narthex. Thank you!

Prayer Requests

Hampton Bagdasarian requests prayers for June Kemp; Sue Cardin requests prayers for Helga Siam and David Siam; Helen Wronski requests prayers for Josephine Morrow and Elaine Wronski; Susan Anderson requests prayers for her daughter, Melanie, and for Justin and Catherine; Sue Carrow requests prayers for her brother, Michael Curran; Sally Hetfield requests prayers for Karen, Erin, Donna, and Sam; and prayers are requested for Dawn Ahaesy's father, Francis Lajoie; Bruce Kabasinsky, Murdock Snair; Sis Prefontaine; Ronald Taylor; Charlotte Perry's nephew, Peter; Sally Day; Dawn Smiley; Rita Swett; and Jean Andes; and Paul, a friend of Brian MacInnes

Concordia Collection - Mark Your Calendars

Concordia collection month starts in four weeks, on April 1st. Those spring fever cleaners and sorters are reminded to put aside your donations for our collection time - the whole month of April. More details in the April newsletter.

History Room

Warm weather is on its way, and we'll resume our weekly workdays in the History Room.

So many of you have shared happenings from our past with photos, notices, bulletins, obituaries, and membership cards. We encourage you to continue with this kindness, helping us to weave a more personal picture of the life and times at Tatnuck/FCC.

If you want to make the items a loan, we'll copy and return your originals. Thank you for already sharing and for what you might still uncover!

Super Saturday

2018 (Saturday, March 17th)

8:00 a.m. to 3:45 p.m.

Minnechaug Regional High School
Wilbraham, MA

The Southern New England collaboration is holding its spring Super Saturday event - a full-day of skill building, networking, and discussion. The day will include worship, a keynote address, two workshops, an optional lunch activity, continental breakfast, lunch, and a marketplace of vendors. There are also several interesting workshops to choose from. If you'd like to know more about it, there's a brochure on the Missions table in the Narthex, or you can view it online at www.macucc.org, and click on "Super Saturday."

The registration deadline is Sunday, March 3rd, so please let our church delegates, Sue Cardin or me, know if you're interested in attending as soon as possible. We usually carpool to this event, so if you don't drive, it's no problem.

Thank you!

Sue Anderson
(774-253-0715)

Fellowship Notes for March

We hope you'll join us on Tuesday mornings at 10:00 a.m. in the church parlor for coffee and snacks, followed by our program of the day. Everyone is more than welcome. Bring a friend!

- March 6: Rev. Alfred of the Resurrection Ministries Church will join us to share insights into his church. His congregation meets on the top floor of our building on Sunday mornings, as well as several other times during the week.
- March 13: Movie Day. TBA. Do you have a favorite one to share? Popcorn will be served, of course.
- March 17: Happy St. Patrick's Day. Wear your green!
- March 20: Berg's Florist will help us create a spring arrangement (spring begins today at 12:15 p.m.) Cost is \$12. We will also be preparing Easter cookie trays for our shut-ins and staff. Please bring a dozen of your best homemade cookies to share. **Today we'll be meet-ing in Fellowship Hall.**
- March 27: Let's go out for lunch together today. Destination to be determined.
- March 29: Maundy Thursday Service with Holy Communion at 7:00 p.m.**
- March 30: Good Friday Service at 7:00 p.m.**
- April 1: Celebrate the Resurrection. Alleluia! Happy Easter. Service at 10:00 a.m.**



Easter Sunday Flowers

Our Sanctuary will be decorated with tulips and lilies on Easter Sunday, April 1, 2018. If you would like to help with the beautification and order tulips or lilies, please indicate on the form below.

I would like to provide _____ tulip plant(s) at \$8.00 each

I would like to provide _____ lily plant(s) at \$8.00 each

In memory of _____

In honor of _____

In celebration of _____

From _____

***** Recognition will be in the Easter Service Bulletin *****

Please return this completed form in an envelope with a check or cash. Place the envelope with payment in the offering plate or mail it to the church office. **Return the form and payment by Sunday, March 25, 2018.** Indicate on the envelope: **Easter Flowers.**

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

Please check one: _____ I will leave my plant for a person who is sick or shut-in
_____ I will pick up my plant after the Easter Service

Council Corner

Fellow members, as you are aware from the Annual Meeting, your Council is working on a revision to the FCC By-Laws. In this article I hope to provide insight into the problem the Council is trying to solve and the steps being taken toward that solution.

One way of looking at the problem is that we have too much church and not enough membership. Stated from another perspective, we have an organizational structure that is meant for a larger church membership. If one looks at the Nominating Committee report from the 2016 Annual Report there are 53 positions to be filled (54 counting the Bookkeeper who is now a member and unpaid). As Clerk, I have taken the liberty of reducing our 'official' membership of 79, as reported to the MACUCC, to a participating, by their presence at worship and by their ability, in my judgement, to attend committee meetings, membership of 44 souls. We have several members who are presently serving in 4 and 5 capacities. The Council took notice of the mismatch between requirements and resources as we prepared for the 2016 Annual Meeting and established a committee to look into ways of reducing the requirements because the resources weren't likely to increase significantly in the foreseeable future.

The committee discovered that the Chaffin Congregational Church in Holden had recently changed their operational structure for similar reasons. Then at the spring Super Saturday, the attendees brought back two books which discussed changing the operational structure of small churches to better match requirements to resources. One of these books, titled "Challenging the church Monster" by Douglas Bixby speaks to the experience of his church's structure, which is similar to Chaffin's and is similar to what your Council is discussing. In the Chaffin structure, there are two primary boards; Operations and Ministry. For FCC these boards would, most likely, retain the titles of Trustees and Deacons.

In this type structure all members are considered trustees, all are considered deacons and all are considered Christian educators. Several are called to

lead by nomination as Officers or as Chair, or Coordinator, and vice-Chair, or vice-Coordinator, of one of the boards. The Council would remain, but its membership would be more fluid. The previous structure of committees nominated and voted into position would become ad hoc (temporary) sub-committees of the boards called for the purpose of doing a specific task. Meetings of the Boards would include representatives of any working sub-committees. These representatives would also be invited to Council meetings if their input is needed. This structure I have just described is not set in stone, in fact it is just now being discussed by the Council. The Council provides guidance to the Boards and the congregation provides guidance to the Council.

As author Bixby states, going with a smaller structure requires a lot of trust on behalf of the congregation as fewer members assume greater authority. It also requires that the Boards and Council bring decisions which require some deliberation, much of which may have previously been accomplished at a lower level, to the congregation. There would be an expectation of several congregation level meetings throughout out the year for these purposes, some of which under the current structure may not have risen to this level, but that is part of the tradeoff. Mr. Bixby also suggests that in switching to this new organization, the congregation allow themselves a trial period of two or three years of adjustment before any consideration of reverting to the previous structure.

As stated at the Annual Meeting, the Council hopes to have a proposal for the congregation to vote on in the next few months.

Don Ansley,
Clerk

March 2018 - FCC Worcester Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 12:30pm Community Lunch 6:30pm AA meeting	2 3:15pm Girl Scouts 6:30pm Cub Scouts	3 10:00am New Hope SDA 12:00pm Church of God
4 10:00am Worship 10:30am Resurrection Ministries 6:30pm AA Meeting	5 10:00am Resurrection Ministries 7:00pm Boy Scouts 7:00pm AA Meeting	6 10:00am Fellowship 7:00pm AA Mtg	7 7:30am BNI 7:00pm Resurrection Ministries 7:00pm AA Meeting	8 12:30pm Community Lunch 6:30pm AA Meeting 7:00pm Choir	9 12:00pm Cub Scouts Derby Day 3:15pm Girl Scouts	10 10:00am New Hope SDA 12:00pm Cub Scouts Derby Day 12:00pm Church of God
11 Daylight Saving Time begins 10:00am Worship 10:30am Resurrection Ministries 11:30am Trustees Meeting 6:30pm AA Meeting	12 10:00am Resurrection Ministries 6:30pm Neighborhood Watch Mtg 7:00pm AA Meeting	13 10:00am Fellowship 12:00pm Missions Meeting 7:00pm AA Mtg	14 7:30am BNI 7:00pm Resurrection Ministries 7:00pm AA Meeting	15 12:30pm Community Lunch 6:30pm AA Meeting 7:00pm Choir	16 3:15pm Girl Scouts	17 St. Patrick's Day 10:00am New Hope SDA 12:00pm Church of God
18 10:00am Worship 10:30am Resurrection Ministries 11:30am Deacons meeting 6:30pm AA Meeting	19 10:00am Resurrection Ministries 7:00pm AA Meeting	20 Vernal Equinox *Deadline for Submissions to the Friendly Messenger 10:00am Fellowship 7:00pm AA Mtg	21 7:30am BNI 7:00pm Resurrection Ministries 7:00pm AA Meeting	22 12:30pm Community Lunch 6:30pm AA Meeting 7:00pm Choir	23 3:15pm Girl Scouts	24 10:00am New Hope SDA 12:00pm Church of God
25 Palm Sunday 10:00am Worship 10:30am Resurrection Ministries 11:30am Church Council Meeting 6:30pm AA Meeting	26 10:00am Resurrection Ministries 7:00pm AA Meeting	27 10:00am Fellowship 7:00pm AA Mtg	28 7:30am BNI 7:00pm Resurrection Ministries 7:00pm AA Meeting	29 Maundy Thursday 6:30pm AA Meeting 7:00pm Maundy Thursday Service 8:00pm Choir	30 Good Friday 3:15pm Girl Scouts 7:00pm Good Friday Service	31 Holy Saturday 10:00am New Hope SDA 12:00pm Church of God