

# FRIENDLY MESSENGER

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As we continue on our journey into Lent, the question arises, “How do we observe Lent with genuine authenticity?” This newsletter article will be a brief reflection on that question that aspires to move beyond superficial observances such as giving up chocolate, only to binge on chocolate sweets when Easter comes around.

Lent is about re-living the process of committing your life to God. It is essentially a recommitment process, renewing one’s vow of baptism.

One of the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous is “Did a fearless moral inventory of all my defects.” The next step is “Asked “Higher Power” to help me remove them.”

This is more genuinely the purpose of Lent: to provide a community time of reflection on ways in which we may have fallen short in our devotion to God and to ask God for help in turning our lives back around. This of course is a constant process for every Christian. We constantly fall away and return. Lent is simply a special season devoted to repentance and then experiencing the wonderful grace of new life and resurrection. The events of Easter and the Passion, the whole world rejecting God’s love in Christ in every way and hanging him on a cross, torturing love, hating love, ignoring love, preferring other concerns to love. Only to have God love us back anyway, providing a new life, a connected life, a life at one with the purpose, meaning, and salvation of love. So at one with love, that Holy union with God occurs and imparts to us the eternal nature of Love. Eternal Being. Eternal Love.

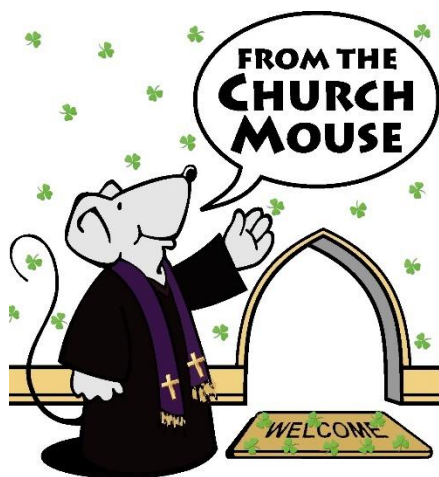
It is the process of grounding ourselves in that love that “removes our defects” when we ask for help.

Which defects act as a poison to your relationships, your vocation, your health, your finances, and your sense of what is right? Which habits have a toxic effect on your well-being, your family, your community, and the planet?

Lent is that time to choose again to be free of those toxins and relish the joy, love, and vast community connection that comes with the oneness of spirit and love itself. Ultimately it is not a choice to give up something, but a choice to gain everything. Everything that matters, that is real, has substance and won’t pass away. We gain eternal love and eternal life.

My sermon series for Lent follows a novice in his decision to get baptized in the first century of Christian community evolution. It will also follow an elder and another follower who have fallen away and find in Lent, a time of renewal. This set of serial sermons will culminate in the joy and celebration of Easter. I hope this journey will be as meaningful to you as it has been for me, as I have reflected on my baptism vows while preparing this Lenten sermon series.

Easter Blessings,  
*Pastor Jack*



Wow, we have both St. Patrick's Day AND Easter this month! Top o' the mornin' to ya AND Easter Blessings! What a wonderful time of year! There'll be a St. Patrick's Day parade AND an Easter Parade to celebrate. They say that everyone's at least a little bit Irish on St. Patrick's Day. Welll...at least I like to think so cuz it makes it so much more fun to celebrate. Knowing my sweet tooth the way I do, of course I'm looking forward to all of those freshly baked Irish goodies. I love Irish soda bread, especially the seeds and raisins and they're both good for me! Do you do the Irish Step Dance? I've tried but trip over my own feet, so I'd much rather watch. It looks like a lot of fun, though. Did you know

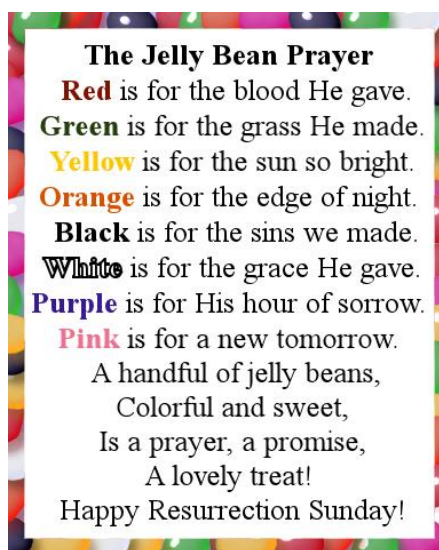
that most of the girls wear wigs so they look taller with all their long hair that bounces around and also so they don't have to curl their own hair? Sounds kinda silly to me, but I do love watching them. Irish Step Dancing has been around for hundreds of years, since around 1689. That sure is a long time!

Then comes my VERY FAVORITE holiday (next to Christmas cuz without Christ being born, He wouldn't have died for our sins), EASTER. The eggs are decorated so pretty and I love watching the little children hunt for them on Easter morning. Everything is so festive and everyone seems to be so happy. Why wouldn't they be? Jesus died on the cross just so OUR sins will be forgiven. Oh, how he suffered, all for us, so that we will be able to enter into heaven, where everything is perfect, where there's no pain, no problems, no violence, no suffering of any kind. Only happiness and glory with Our Heavenly Father who gave His Son for us. No wonder everyone is so happy. Oh, how I love Him and thank Him, not only on Easter, but every day of my life!

Happy St. Patrick's Day!

Happy Easter!

Your friendly church mouse,  
Nioclás O'Church (AKA Nick)



## The First Congregational Church in Worcester Annual Meeting



A big thank you goes out to all who worked so hard to put the Annual Meeting together. Thanks also to the congregation who either braved the cold outside as well as inside, along with no water in the church, and attended the Annual Meeting in person and also to those who attended via Zoom. We couldn't have done it without any of you! We're all set for another fruitful year.

Matt, our Moderator



Scott, our  
Minister of Music



Nancy, our Clerk &  
Greg, our *Everything*



Pastor Jack, our Minister



Some of the Brave Souls who ventured out into the cold, to come inside, to the cold hall for Worship and our Annual Meeting. The room was cold, but our hearts and Spirits were toasty warm! Thanks again, everyone!







If you have some **news**, an **article**, or an **announcement** that you would like included in the newsletter, please leave it in the office with Shelly, give it to Sue Anderson or email her at [deegram@charter.net](mailto:deegram@charter.net) by the **24<sup>th</sup>** of each month. Thank you!



### ZOOM OR YOUTUBE



Our **Sunday services** will be available via Zoom and afterwards on YouTube! If you are at home and would like to join us virtually on Sunday mornings at 10 am, you can do so by following this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83102423294?pwd=RjhHZGNDZDl5ODNHWFabnRVZ2Vldz09>



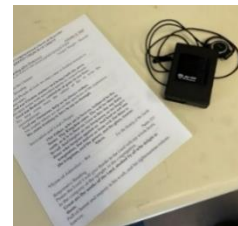
You can also find our latest services here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDQmijukLaC24hwdyayupdg> or by searching "First Church, Worcester" in YouTube.



### Accessibility Items Available for Worship!

Did you know that we now offer large print bulletins? That's right! They are available in the narthex as you enter the sanctuary. We also have hearing assistance devices that make hearing what is said at the pulpit much easier! They are also in a basket on the table in the narthex.



### Carpet Fund

Our sincere thanks for your continued contributions to our Teddy Bear Bank in the narthex before the service and in the parlor following it. You're filling him to the brim with exciting anticipation! We now have over \$550 towards our goal.



### Looking for Something to do in March?



Mechanics Hall & WICN 90.5FM present

**BROWN BAG**  
*Concert Series*

Mechanics Hall holds concerts which are free and open to the public on Wednesdays. No registration is required. Doors open at 11:30 am and the shows start at 12:00 pm. You can learn a little more about them on their website –

<https://mechanicshall.org/brown-bag-concerts/>

### March Line-Up

**March 13** - Evening Sky Band

**March 20** - the Daniel Bennett Group

**March 27** - Betty's Bounce

## Hospitality



Please join us in the parlor for coffee and goodies every Sunday after worship. If you are able to host a coffee hour, there is a sign-up sheet on the table. If you bring the goodies, beverages and paper goods. You don't even have to bake, store-bought is A-OK. It doesn't have to be fancy either. Fruit is always good and so are crackers and cheese. Also, two or more people can sign up together.

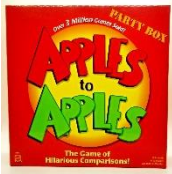
Hope to see you there and maybe adding your name to the sign-up sheet!



*"My cup overflows with blessings." Psalm 23:5*



## CHURCH FELLOWSHIP



Come and join us on **WEDNESDAYS at 10:00 am** for some great fellowship and fun! Our plans for March include a game of Apples to Apples, an Easter craft, lunch out, and a day of chatting and catching up.

*Of course, our plans are always subject to change, so stay tuned!*



## Carty Cupboard

### The First Sunday of Every Month



Thanks a million for your Carty Cupboard donations! In February, we donated **12 more bags** of groceries! Donating not only non-perishable items, but also personal care items and/or baby items, which are always welcome. This month, I'm sure things that the Easter Bunny might bring would be terrific!

**Thank you for bringing a little light to the darkness of someone in need!**



## Deacons Fund

On the first Sunday of every month, we take up a collection that is used to provide one-time, emergency assistance to a neighbor in need. Blue envelopes are included in your bulletin for this offering. Your contributions are greatly appreciated! **Thank you for the difference you make!**



## Large or Small, We Appreciate Them All

We are truly blessed to have loving supporters like you.  
Thank you for your meaningful contributions that help us to help others.



Hopefully, we won't need this notice again until next winter but just in case,  
I'll leave it for this month.



## Youth Outreach

Reach out to your friends and invite them to join our Youth Group. They'll see just how much fun it is and how much it enriches their lives!



*"Your uniqueness is your strength. Embrace your individuality and let it shine brightly."*



## We're Praying for You

We would like to keep Hampton Bagdasarian in our prayers as he is having trouble with one of his eyes; Connie MacInnes requests prayers for her niece Linda and friend Marie Samuelson who is very ill; Judy Mitchell requests prayers for her granddaughter, Ellanora; Sue & Norman Anderson request prayers for their daughter, Melanie Anderson, Sue's brother, Danny Waskevich, and their friend, Roger Waite. Dawn & Matt Ahaesy request prayers for Gina Ahaesy; The Deacons request prayers for Dolores Trzcinski, Jeanne Fassett, Paul Scherdell, and Joyce & Armand Thienel. Our prayers are also with Normairis Rivera's son, Joey. Kristin Olson requests prayers for Mitch Bourque. Prayers also continue for Erika Vecsey, as she continues her battle with cancer. Greg Waters and Cindy MacLaurin request prayers for Cindy's mother, who is battling cancer once again. Let us not forget to hold one another in prayer.

If you would like to add a prayer concern or update our list, please email the church office at [office@fcc-worcester.org](mailto:office@fcc-worcester.org) or call the office at 508-752-4635.

*"Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God."*

**It's Time to Order Your Easter Flowers to Help Decorate the Sanctuary!**



## *Easter Sunday Flowers*



Our Sanctuary will be decorated with tulips and daffodils on Easter Sunday, March 31, 2024. If you would like to help with our beautification by ordering these plants, please indicate your choice on the form below. You can place your order in the Offertory Basket or leave it in the office with Shelly.

### **PLEASE PRINT**

I would like to provide\_\_\_\_\_ tulip plant(s) at \$10.00 each

I would like to provide\_\_\_\_\_ daffodil plant(s) at \$10.00 each

In memory of \_\_\_\_\_

In honor of \_\_\_\_\_

In celebration of \_\_\_\_\_

From \_\_\_\_\_

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

Please return this completed form along with cash or a check by **Friday, March 22, 2024.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

### **Please check one:**

\_\_\_\_\_ **I will pick up my plant/plants after the Easter Service.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **I will leave my plant/plants for someone else to enjoy.**

Happy Birthday



02 Elianna Miles  
18 Mason Martin  
29 Myles Martin

March  
03 Norman Anderson  
18 Annalise McGrail  
28 Ellen Dalbeck

11 Susan Anderson  
20 Molly Martin  
29 Greg Waters

April  
10 Kristin Olson      16 Khyllie Richard      22 Susan Cardin  
24 Leanne Jezerski      26 Judy Langlois



March  
24 Bill & MaryKay McGrail

April  
05 Dolores & Marie Trzcinski      18 Steve & Heidi Hinson



*Give thanks for the cross  
And rejoice in the resurrection...  
As you reflect on Christ's sacrifice,  
May He fill your heart with grateful praise  
And surround you with His redeeming love  
That reconciled you to the Father –  
So, you can live in Christ's resurrection,  
Knowing death could not consume Him,  
For when He arose victoriously,  
He sealed eternity for you.*

*Have a Blessed Easter!  
© By M.S.Lowndes  
Scripture: Romans 6:8-9*



*"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."*

*1 Peter 1:3*





## Sunday

**03 10:00 am** Third Sunday in Lent ~ FCC Worship Service ~ Gluten free communion and non-alcoholic grape juice ~ Carty Cupboard donations ~ Deacons Fund Collection

## Wednesday

**06 10:00 am** Fellowship ~ Relax, Chat & Catch Up

## Saturday

**09 Nighttime** ~ Don't forget to spring ahead before bed ~ don't miss church!



## Sunday

**10 10:00 am** Fourth Sunday in Lent ~ FCC Worship Service  
**11:30 am** Trustees Meeting

## Wednesday

**13 11:00 am** Fellowship ~ To be determined

## Sunday

**17 10:00 am** Fifth Sunday in Lent ~ FCC Worship Service  
**11:30 am** Deacons Meeting



## Tuesday

**19**



## Wednesday

**20 10:45 am** Fellowship ~ Lunch Out

## Sunday

**24 10:00 am** FCC Worship Service with Palms  
**11:30 am** Council Meeting



## Wednesday

**27 10:00 am** Fellowship~ Easter Craft

## Thursday

**28 6:00 pm** Soup Supper

**7:00 pm** Maundy Thursday with communion by intinction - we use gluten free bread and non-alcoholic grape juice

## Friday

**29 7:00 pm** Special Good Friday Service

## Sunday

**31 10:00 am** Easter Beautiful FCC Worship Service



*"March winds and April showers bring forth May flowers."*

— English Proverb