

# FRIENDLY MESSENGER

September 2024

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## Bible Study

Throughout my ministry, since I started at Kingston Congregational Church in 1988, I have always led an adult Bible study based on the lectionary text that would be used in the service that week. It was a critical part of my sermon preparation, and a bedrock of the rhythm of the week. It allowed me to encounter the text and shape the sermon in the context of relationships and questions. Sometimes preachers can become over-familiar with a text. When a study group brings their curiosity, it makes the passage come alive again. A sermon is best when it is formed by both the text and the needs of those listening. The lectionary study groups have ranged from the Professors at Newman and Kingston to people who lacked housing at the church in Providence. Each group brought their own insights and questions. It can appear that a sermon is a monologue. An autocratic authoritarian one way street of imposed opinion. Ideally a sermon is the opposite. Ideally a sermon is a point of inspiration that initiates or perpetuates an ongoing pastoral conversation as we seek understanding of God's will in our lives together as a community. It is bringing the ancient wisdom that came out of a millennium of wrestling with God and experiencing God into our messy, modern, multicultural lives to wrestle some more. When we experience wisdom in our own lives, we understand that the Bible is not just a dusty, musty book to feel guilty about not reading, it is a living document that invites us to breathe new life into our souls.

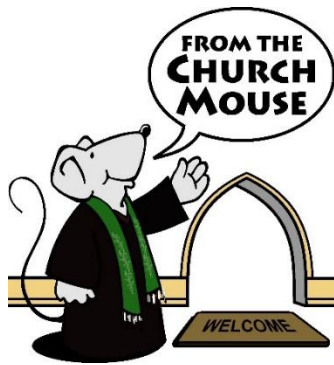
The times we live in call for people who actually know their Bible well. The Bible is being hijacked by extremists, even violent extremists, like the ones who carried banners quoting scripture into the riot and insurrection at the National Capital Building on January 6th. These extremists wrap themselves in the flag and embolden themselves with a cult mentality based on false interpretation of the Bible and false appropriation of the Bible by those who want to manipulate their followers by appealing to symbols of virtue while ignoring the substance of virtue. This growing movement of "Christian Nationalism" is all the more reason why those of us who know the true meaning of faith and endeavor to practice love with our whole hearts should know our scripture well. Learning is the antidote to ignorance. Christian Nationalism is turning people away from churches in record numbers. To be able to perpetuate the faith in these times we need to seek and share that wisdom that guards us against false prophets and wolves in sheep's clothing.

Discerning these things calls for face-to-face dialogue in respectful and caring relationships. Not posting put downs on social media. Many of my most cherished experiences have involved wrestling together over a passage, asking hard questions with no easy answers, and being blessed in the process by good friends and God's Holy Spirit.

May God's grace abound,

Pastor Jack

*"For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." ~ Romans 15:4*



There's so much excitement all around us, have you noticed? It happens every year around this time. It's sort of the end of the summer blues mixed with the excitement of going back to school. Parents are rushing hither and yon, getting school supplies, clothes, shoes, haircuts; they're thinking about lunches again...and we can't forget snacks. They want to make sure they're healthy ones, too. There's a lot to do to get ready for the new school year. And the kids will stay excited for oh...at least a week! Hahaha! I'm just kidding - lots of kids love school and have a great thirst for learning. That's so refreshing, rather than all the talk about which video games they like or are best at and who has the highest score, or grumbling about "nothing to do". Yes, it's time to go back to school. Before we know it, we'll hear the song of laughter in the school yards again. That's my favorite sound of all! Sometimes though....

I feel so very bad,  
I feel so very sad,  
if I hear of a bully at school.  
They need to, they must  
It's surely unjust,  
They must live by the golden rule.  
*I think Timothy learned this.*

### **Timothy the Mouse**

Timothy the mouse, once went to school,  
With all his pencils and books.  
He annoyed his principal, his teachers and friends  
And all the cafeteria's cooks.  
He threw paper airplanes and giggled and laughed,  
And jibbered and jabbered and yelled.  
The class bully squeaked and everyone shrieked,  
When Timothy tied a knot in his tail.  
Timothy, Timothy, you naughty little mouse,  
Why are you always so mean?  
You hurt other's feelings, and tails and ears,  
You've caused all this pain, have you seen?  
Timothy the mouse hung his head in shame,  
And slowly wiped a tear from his eye.  
He felt very sorry for what he had done,  
And all the others that he had made cry.

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Your friendly church mouse,

**Nick**



**Good News** ~ Fellowship is back in session on Wednesday, September 11<sup>th</sup>!

**Bad News** ~ Bev won't be leading us anymore (but of course she'll still be with us, guiding us and helping out with the planning).

**Good News** ~ Ruth is enthusiastically jumping in feet first and taking the reigns!

**Sooo....**

*Come gather in the parlor;  
choose your favorite seat;  
grab a cup of coffee,  
and get yourself a treat.*

*Fellowship is back and although it isn't new,  
we'd love to start our planning  
with great ideas from you!  
So, come along and join us,  
we'd love to see you there  
to help us start the year off,  
with conviction and with flair!  
Our planning team's been busy,  
deciding what to do,  
and collectively decided,  
we need your input too!*

I hope you'll be joining us!

Remember, if you don't give us any input, you can't complain!



Let's make this an exciting year!

(You'll notice that there are no activities listed on the calendar for September. This is because the newsletter is being published before the planning committee meets and before our first meeting.

Come to the meeting to see what's ahead!)



## ENGLISH LESSONS AND PRACTICE FOR PEOPLE WHO SPEAK CREOLE

Join with friends to learn Conversational English that can help with jobs, school, and communicating with family, friends, and neighbors.

ESL Classes Tuesdays 2:00 - 4:00 PM and

Thursdays 3:00 - 4:00 PM

There is a Worship Meal from 4:00 - 5:00 PM on Thursdays.

These classes and meals are offered to you FREE at the First Congregational Church in Worcester, 1070 Pleasant Street, Worcester, MA (in the Tatnuck Neighborhood) which is easily accessible by taking Bus 2 (direct) or Bus 6 (a short walk).



This is a community outreach program of S.O.S. Operation Espoir, "New Hope International Ministries" They are taught by Professor Thomas Reed Jones, with the aid of Pastor Jack Jones, Pastor Ketelie Altena, and Dr. Luckner Gierrier. For more information, call: 774-670-2436 or 508-373-8121.

## What I've Perceived

These classes are rewarding and transforming to the students as well as those who are working with them. They are so eager to learn and are doing great picking up different words and phrases in the English language. You can read the excitement in their eyes and see it in their smiles. Rewarding to the students? Yes, but it's also rewarding to those who spend a little time with them. If you have a chance, stop by sometime, perhaps on a Thursday at the Worship Meal when you can see first-hand, what I see. Eating, praying and singing together, it's heart-warming!

Joyful blessings,

*Sue Anderson*



## Do you have something you'd like to see in our newsletter?



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 Sue Anderson or email her at [deegram@charter.net](mailto:deegram@charter.net) or [office@fcc-worcester.org](mailto:office@fcc-worcester.org) by the **20<sup>th</sup> of each month**.

## See it here first!

If you would like a copy of the newsletter sent to you via email, please email the office and we'll add you to our list. There are also copies in the narthex that you can pick up. If you don't have an email address or can't get to church, send us your address and we'll be happy to send you a copy every month.





## 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=RjhHZGNDZDlyODNHVWFabnRVZ2Vldz09>



You can also find our latest services here:

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



## Exciting News!



With our carpet funds continuing to grow, thanks to **YOU**, we've been able to choose the carpeting and are working on having it installed! Thank you for your continued contributions to the Teddy Bear! Please don't stop, as this is a costly project but needs to be done ASAP, for the safety of us all.

Thank you again and God bless you!



## Hospitality

Join Us for  
**COFFEE HOURS**



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, we supply the 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!

*"When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality."*

*~ Romans 12:13*

## Thank You!

A big shout out to Danny and John for always showing up early to help with setting up for Coffee Hour, then staying to help clean up afterwards. We appreciate you!



*"True hospitality is marked by an open response to the dignity of each and every person."  
- Kathleen Norris*



## Carty Cupboard

### The First Sunday of Every Month

Many thanks for your Carty Cupboard donations! In August we donated 12 bags of groceries. Time to think about back-to-school snacks and quick and easy but nutritious breakfast foods as well as lunches. They truly appreciate whatever you can give. Snacks like fruit cups, pudding cups and granola bars are always welcome. Jelly in plastic jars, mac and cheese and cereal – hot or cold are great for this time of year, too. Donating not only non-perishable food, but also personal care items and/or baby items, are always welcome.



**Your contributions have indeed made a meaningful difference in the lives of those who Carty Cupboard serves - thank you for your kindness and generosity.**



## Deacons Fund

Also, 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. Special envelopes are included in your bulletin for this offering. Every little bit helps. Your contributions are greatly appreciated!



**Your donations not only mean the world to us, but to those in need, as well. Thank you!**

*"Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love." ~Mother Teresa*

# Let us Pray

Please continue to hold Pastor Jack in your prayers as he continues working through his health issues.



Connie MacInnes requests prayers for her niece Linda; Sue & Norman Anderson request prayers for their daughter, Melanie Anderson, Sue's brother, Danny Waskevich and their friend, Roger Waite. They would also appreciate prayers for their doctor, Phillip Fournier, who's battling cancer. 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. We ask for continued prayers for Hampton Bagdasarian who is having trouble with one eye; and for Erika Vecsey; Ellen Dalbeck requests prayers for the McDermott Family.

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.

"Heal me, Lord, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for you are the one I praise."  
Jeremiah 17:14



## Natalie Harlow Maynard



After Natalie's Celebration of Life, her daughter Susan was kind enough and thoughtful enough to give us some of the flowers that decorated the hall. Some went home with Ruth, some

with me, and the rest decorated our sanctuary beautifully on Sunday morning. I felt like Natalie was right there, watching over us with her infectious smile. What an incredible legacy she left behind! Her children are as loving, kind and thoughtful as she was. God bless you, and your beautiful family, Natalie!



"So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy." John 16:22

## Hand bells

How exciting it is that we've found a set of handbells that we can borrow for the Christmas Season! Rev. Brae Adams at the First United Church of Worcester has them and is happy to loan them to us. Would you like to participate in a Handbell Choir? Please let **Pastor Jack** or **Scott** know soon, if you're interested. **Let's make this Christmas an especially joyous one!**



### September

04 Clarissa Nigro      11 Ronald Taylor      13 Noah Miles

### October

03 Scarlet Rucinski      04 Jean Andes      10 Shirley Avery  
12 Jillian DiBonaventura      12 Russell Souffrant  
15 Hampton Bagdasarian      19 Ann  
Scherdell      19 Armand Thienel  
23 Bob Smith      23 Joe LaRiviere      24 Normairis Rivera  
27 Faith Audette      28 Barbara Brosnihan



*"May your day be filled with God's grace and the warmth of His love. Happy Birthday!"*



### September

05 Scott Yonker & Bill Condon  
19 Robert & Marianne Bourgeault

### October

07 Miloz & Ashley Rucinski      17 Armand & Joyce Thienel



### *News from Utah!*

*Doug Perkins has moved. If you would like his new address, email, stop by or call the office and we'd be happy to give it to you.  
Best wishes, Doug!*



www.jesperdelauran.dk





# September

## Sunday

01 10:00 am FCC Worship Service ~ Communion Sunday ~ We use gluten free communion and non-alcoholic grape juice  
Carty Cupboard Donations ~ Deacons Fund Collection

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## Monday



02 All day ~ Labor Day

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## Sunday

08 10:00 am FCC Worship Service

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## Wednesday

11 10:00 am Welcome Back to Fellowship (Parlor)

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## Friday

13 1:00 pm Trustees Meeting (Conference Room)

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## Wednesday

18 10:00 am Fellowship (Parlor)  
6:30 pm Deacons Meeting (Conference Room)

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## Sunday

15 10:00 am FCC Worship Service

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## Sunday

22 10:00 am FCC Worship Service  
11:30 am Council Meeting (Conference Room)

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## Wednesday

25 10:00 am Fellowship (Parlor)

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## Sunday

29 10:00 am FCC Worship Service

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*"By all these lovely tokens, September days are here. With summer's best of weather and autumn's best of cheer." ~ Helen Hunt Jackson*

*"September is the month of renewal, a time to harvest dreams and plant new seeds of hope."*

*~ Unknown*