

THE CHURCH BELL

FEBRUARY 2017

The First Congregational Church
Newsletter

A Congregation of the United Church of Christ
At 26 Central Street in West Boylston
online at www.fccwb.com



Transfiguration
of the LORD

*The Lord has yet more light and truth to break forth
from his holy Word."*

- John Robinson, pastor to the Pilgrims

*Happy are those who hear the joyful call to worship, for they will walk
in the light of your presence, Lord," - Psalm 89:15 NLT*

FEBRUARY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Worship and Church School at 10:15 a.m.
Childcare is provided for every Sunday service.

February 4 ~ 4:30 p.m. First Saturday Worship Service

Wallace A. Hurd leading
The Sacrament of Holy Communion

February 5 ~ The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Wallace A. Hurd preaching
The Sacrament of Holy Communion
Chancel Choir

February 12 ~ The Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

Wallace A. Hurd preaching
Chancel Choir

February 19 ~ The Seventh Sunday after Epiphany

Wallace A. Hurd preaching
Chancel Ringers

February 26 ~ Transfiguration Sunday

Wallace A. Hurd preaching
Chancel Choir

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Hurd in the Halls.....

Pastor Small and I often exchange articles and ideas with one another over email. He sent me the following article from Ministry Matters, by Rebekeh Simon-Peter, in early January. He thought I could share it with the church, and I thought I should. So, from both of us, here are some things that we can do, as individuals and as a congregation, this year, to not only grow our congregation, but – more importantly – grow together in faith and discipleship.

As we start the new year, I want to share with you seven counterintuitive resolutions for 2017. Plus two bonus resolutions. If you are a growing church, pay close attention. Even if you are not growing, but you want to begin to grow, you can participate in this game as well. Don't worry about doing all of them. Even taking on three or four of them will make a profound difference for you and the life of the church.

Love yourself. It's true that we love our neighbors as ourselves. Want to be a better neighbor? Start by refusing to judge or berate yourself. Then practice unconditional self-respect, self-love, and self-acceptance. Let that kind of love radiate out to those around you. **Tip:** Start by smiling at yourself in the mirror.

Pray the next prayer. It's easy to get stuck with a basic prayer like, "God be with us." Or "God bless us." Or "God help us." The truth is God is always, always, always with us. There is no place we can go where God is not. Likewise, since God is love, God is always blessing us. And God is always there to help us. So trust these basic realities, and begin to pray the next prayer. What do you want to co-create with God? What do you envision for the coming year? Pray that prayer. **Tip:** Start by thanking God for always being there, always blessing and always helping.

Envision the future. Develop a vision that expands assumptions about what is possible. Then plan something beyond your ability to accomplish. Stretching yourself will allow the Spirit of God to work in new ways among you. With God in the picture, even stale realities can be transformed. **Tip:** Envision what the Kingdom might look like in your corner of the world. Ask how you can contribute to making that a reality.

Gospel lesson. Read the Gospels out loud together as a group. At least a chapter at a time. Allow the originality of Jesus' message to speak to you again. Let the big picture emerge. Listen for what is new, empowering, unexpected. **Tip:** Sit in silence for three minutes and absorb what you've heard before anyone speaks.

Start fresh. Clean out a cluttered closet or classroom. Take down old banners or decorations. Paint the bathrooms and the sanctuary. Let go of a ministry or project that no longer bears fruit. Update your website. Delete your old phone message. Create space for new ideas, new people, new projects. **Tip:** If it's stained, unused, unclaimed or out of date, it's time to let it go!

Practice heaven. Make friends with someone you are afraid of or someone who angers you. Don't try to fix or change them. Instead, find the best in them as they are right now. This will be good practice for heaven. **Tip:** Start by silently sending them love. Even if you don't feel it.

Disbelieve. Let go of stubbornly held beliefs that only serve to keep you stuck. For instance: We can't grow in this neighborhood. Children aren't attracted to this church. We don't have enough money to pay our tithes. I'm not good enough. Things are only going to get worse. Bottom line: Don't live into negative self-fulfilling prophecies. Instead, create positive ones. Either way, they'll come true. Might as well choose a future you'll love! **Tip:** Start by looking at where you are stuck. Find the disempowering belief at the base of it. Write it down and turn it over to God. Then create anew.

Here are two bonus counter-intuitive resolutions to make 2017 a positive year to remember:

Get the backstory. People's theologies, politics and life choices make a heck of a lot more sense when we know the backstory. Why they think the way they do. Why they feel the way they do. Why they do what they do. Share your stories with each other. Practice listening with your head and your heart. **Tip:** Lay aside questions and debate. Don't plan any response. See them as a child of God.

Don't cater to fear. Before, during and after the presidential election, people's fears crystallized. Anger and attack have become the go-to responses. It creates an us versus them mentality. Don't cater to fear. Instead, let the gospel of love and courage, faith and self-sacrifice, action and empowerment be your guide. **Tip:** Ask, if God is for us then who can be against us? Remember, we are all "us." Resolutions are a way of setting your intentions. Intentions are powerful corollaries to faith and prayer. They allow us to co-create with God. All good things are waiting for us this year, but we must be open vessels to receive them. Set your intentions for the year, and then take actions consistent with these intentions to watch your words come to life!

Kristjon Imperio: Piano Recital
Thursday, February 2, 6:30 PM

Our Minister of Music will present a 60-minute solo recital featuring works of Barber, Mozart, Chopin, and Shostakovich at the Music Department of Anna Maria College. FREE!
Miriam Hall, Anna Maria College
50 Sunset Lane, Paxton, MA

The Church Register

Deaths

Corinna Heinold
December 27
Gladys Noyes
January 18
Karl Hall
January 20

***The March Bell Deadline is
Thursday, February 16th.***

Send address changes to administrator@fccwb.com

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

MONDAY THRU FRIDAY 9:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.

TELEPHONE: 508-835-4462 FAX: 508-835-4463

OFFICE EMAIL: administrator@fccwb.com

WEBSITE: www.fccwb.com

Messages may be left on the church phone system for the staff at any time. Acting Senior Pastor **Wallace "Chip" Hurd** (ext. 101). Bookkeeper—**Cindy Testa** (ext. 103). Administrative Assistant—**Lisa Fisher** (ext. 100)

Staff Email addresses are:

Chip: whurd@fccwb.com

George: gvogel@charter.net

Financial Office: financial@fccwb.com

Christian Ed Office: pjmduon@msn.com

Community Nursery School: cnswb@fccwb.com

Adult Discussion Group!
Wednesday Evenings
7:00 - 8:30 in the Chapel

Greetings from the Adult Discussion Group!

Although our normal start date was cancelled by typical New England weather we are finally off to a great start with our new series.

Our group has been studying the series from author and Pastor Adam Hamilton entitled, "Creed, What Christians Believe and Why."

All of us can find ourselves in a searching mode. Sometimes our searching for faith answers is relatively simple but at other times our questions can seem very complicated. This current series, as previously outlined, addresses our questions about God, Jesus Christ, The Holy Spirit, The Church, The Communion of Saints, The Forgiveness of Sins, and The Resurrection of the Body.

Through honest discussion we are gaining a better understanding about the beauty of God's grace that has manifested itself in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Please come and join us as we gain a deeper understanding of how our faith can and will continue to make meaning in our lives.

Blessings,
George



If the Weather Outside is
Frightful

In the event of inclement weather please listen to **WSRS 96.1 FM** or **WTAG 580 AM** radio stations for church cancellations. Or call the church answering machine that morning for any cancellations!



Community Nursery School News

Huge thank you to Kendrick who stripped the Nursery School floors while we were closed on Christmas break. The children even took notice of how great they looked when we returned. They were also excited to come back and see each other. We welcomed a few new friends in the preschool and toddler program.

In February we are looking forward to seeing if the ground hog will see his shadow and our Valentine's pajama parties.

CNS will be having an open house at the end of the month. Please keep an eye out for times and dates.

Heidi Pisano - Director
 Email cnswb@fccwb.com



Second Chance Thrift Shop

Thrift Shop is open!
Wednesdays 9:30 am to 1:00 pm
Saturdays 9:30 am to 12:00 pm



WB FOOD PANTRY

First Congregational Church partners with Oakdale United Methodist, Christ Lutheran and Our Lady of Good Council churches in West Boylston to host a Food Pantry. It is open from 1-4 p.m. on the 3rd Tuesday of every month. Donations of food and money are always welcome.

Current Pantry Needs include:
Jams and Jellies
Canned pasta and stews
Coffee and tea. No Kcups please.



Crossroads

SPRING 2017 SCHEDULE

Date	Day	Time	Activity
Feb 12	Sun	6-8 PM	Meeting
Mar 3	Fri	TBD	NOOP
Mar 12	Sun	6-8 PM	Meeting
Mar 26	Sun	6-8 PM	Meeting
Apr 9	Sun	7-9:30 AM	Pancake Breakfast
Apr 23	Sun	6-8 PM	Meeting
May 7	Sun	6-8 PM	Meeting
May 21	Sun	6-8 PM	Meeting

END OF YEAR BARBECUE – DATE TBD

Please check all items for expiration dates as we have to discard any items that have expired.

Donations may be left in the blue bins in the ramp entrance. Thanks so much for your generosity.

This project was funded in part by a grant from the Greater Worcester Community Foundation.

Dishes and containers are piling up in the kitchen. Please take yours home by February 12th.

News from the Board of Church Life

whatever
YOU DO.
DO IT FOR **THE LORD.**

© COLLEGIANS 3/23

Susan Coviello is our volunteer coordinator for Sunday services in February. If you are willing to give of your time in some way on a Sunday morning by serving as a Greeter, an Usher, a Lay Reader, or a Coffee Server, please visit our bulletin board in Fellowship Hall and sign up on our monthly schedule posted there. Or you can contact Susan at her email address: covehome98@gmail.com.

Our Board of Church Life wants to thank each one of you for answering our requests for help each month (actually, each week!) during the past year in support of our Sunday services. Your willingness to serve our church enables our board members to meet our responsibilities each month and helps to make our work a little easier. We appreciate all that you do!

At the same time, I want to express our thanks and appreciation to each of our fellow members of the Board of Church Life for all that you have done for our church during the year.

As you all know, the Advent and Christmas season are a very busy time for our board. Since Advent began in November, our board performed both many unseen tasks preparing the church for Christmas and several visible preparations as well. Small groups decorated the sanctuary with candles and greens, attended to the crèche weekly, set up and arranged the poinsettias at the altar and chancel, and placed numerous crèches in Fellowship Hall, the parlor, the front entry, and the side door hall. Then, after Christmas, we took down all the decorations and packed them away for next year.

Behind the scenes, other small teams filled the candle holders and set them up in baskets for the two services on Christmas Eve, Allison planned and coordinated Christmas Caroling with over 20 people for our shut-ins and those in nursing homes on December 4th. The BOCL coordinated the annual Christmas Cookie Table (with your help!) on December 18th for all our young people. We also delivered over 25 of the poinsettias to our shut-ins, members in nursing homes, and those who had recently lost a loved one.

While none of these numerous tasks and responsibilities takes a lot of time out of our daily schedules to complete, each one does require a certain level of commitment.

Thanks to you all for a job well done! We appreciate all that you do for our church!

Matt Rogers
mmogers232@gmail.com

Prayer and Praise

All those with health concerns:

Jim Bronwell
Howard Rotti
Carol Rotti
Cayleigh Lynne Gilroy-granddaughter of Carol Ann Hamilton's friend
Robert Comeau-Nancy White's son
Linda Redman-Kelley Small's friend
Sylvio Blais-Richie Blais' father
Lynne Pierce-Arlette and Bill Peterson's friend
Steven Small
Frank-the step father of Chris Rotti's wife
Sophia Landeo
Nathan and Jonathan Dehner
John Morrow
Ralph Griswold-Marilyn Griswold's brother
Linda-Carol Rotti's cousin
Ralph-Lori Rotti's brother
Doreen and Todd Albert-daughter and son-in-law of Carol Ann Hamilton's friend



In Sympathy:

Allison Person and family as they grieve the loss of her aunt, Winnie Williams.
The family of Karl Hall.
The family of Gladys Noyes.

Wider concerns:

Thanksgiving for all who come through our doors.
Our service men and women around the world and their families.
Those who are unemployed among us and around the country.

CHRISTIAN OUTREACH BOARD NEWS

Upcoming Events...



JOHN STREET SOUP KITCHEN

Our next opportunity to volunteer at the **John Street Soup Kitchen** will be:
Saturday, March 4th

We need:

- 30 lbs. of mashed potatoes in 5lb increments
- Desserts: 4 dozen squares or cookies
- **Deliver to our church kitchen by 8:30 a.m. on Saturday morning, March 4th**
- People to help serve



Please contact Dave O'Brien at 508-835-8929 or dnobrien@gmail.com for more information.

HOPE for HOUSING

PURCHASE GROCERY CARDS

CVS Stop & Shop Big Y Shaw's Hannaford

Build a Habit...Save a Home

Together, we can end family homelessness!
Food Cards are available for purchase each Sunday following worship.

Checks are accepted for payment

- You purchase food cards- value from \$10 - \$100
- You receive the full face value of the card you purchase.
- What you don't spend remains on your card for later use.
- The store donates 5% of what you spend to prevent family homelessness.



The Outreach Board is planning a mission focused month of March leading up to Mission Sunday on April 2. In the month of March representatives from the following organizations are expected to join us during worship and for after worship discussion:

- Dismas House: Their mission "is to reconcile former prisoners to society, and society to former prisoners." Through Dismas House, the Dismas Family Farm, and the Father John Brooks House, former prisoners are engaged in the hard work of rebuilding lives.
- Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center (CHC): An organization providing health services to the community regardless of individual's ability to pay. **Currently over 28,000 patients of all ages receive care and service through Kennedy CHC's medical home model of care.**
- Rainbow Child Development Center: Provides care, education and therapeutic services for children. Rainbow provides high-quality education to nearly 300 children daily that helps to eliminate barriers and lower the achievement gap between low-income children and children with more academic, social and economic opportunities.
- CMHA, Hope for Housing (HFH) Gift Cards: HFH retailers donate 2-10% of all sales to the Hope for Housing program to assist families at risk of homelessness. By purchasing gift cards for local retailers, you help to stabilize families and keep them in their homes.

Please join us for these informative updates during and after worship in the month of March and learn how our Outreach efforts and funding are helping to fulfill our congregation's mission to *Serve Others*.

Worcester Refugee Assistance Project has resumed activities and are looking for new volunteers for the following:

1. Monday and Thursday evenings from 6-7:30pm for ESL, homework help, and reading buddies.
2. Saturday mornings from 10am-12pm for children's programs.
3. Saturday afternoons from 1-3pm for youth programs.

Check out their website calendar for updates on program activities and contact them if you are interested in volunteering. www.worcesterrefugees.org

Church School News



Scout Sunday



Scout Recognition Sunday will take place on February 19th. If your children are either Girl or Boy Scouts of any age or rank, please ask them to wear their uniform to church to celebrate! Adult scout leaders are encouraged to wear their uniforms as well. This wonderful program has been operating for over 100 years. All Scouts pledge to serve God and many of the lessons taught to scouts are lessons that Jesus taught us. We hope your children will participate!

Lent Begins March 1st!

In preparation for Lent, we have lots of resources for our family and friends in Fellowship Hall. Come, browse a selection of literature to enhance your Lenten experience—either personally, or together with your family. You'll be delighted with the ways Lent makes Easter a most marvelous celebration!

Lenten workshop

The CE board will be discussing some ideas for a Lent workshop or program. If you are interested in helping or have some great ideas. Please see e-mail Pam Doonan at pjmdoon@msn.com



Mark Your Calendars!



Please return your Advent wreath forms from the Advent Wreath Workshop to the CE Office. **Thank you!**

February 14— Valentine's Day, perform a random act of kindness!!!!

February 19— Scout Sunday

March 1st—Ash Wednesday Service at Oakdale at 7pm.

CROSSROADS YOUTH GROUP

invites all youth grades 7—12 to join them twice monthly for fun activities and events. Their calendar is posted in Fellowship Hall...

*To reach the Christian Education Office,
please e-mail Pam Doonan at
pjmdoon@msn.com*



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
26 CENTRAL STREET, WEST BOYLSTON, MA 01583-1600

Wallace A. Hurd IV, Acting Senior Pastor
The Reverend George E. Vogel, Associate Pastor Emeritus
William E. Nierintz, Ch.M., Minister of Music Emeritus
Cindy Testa, Bookkeeper

Kristjon Imperio, Minister of Music
Lisa A. Fisher, Administrative Assistant, Editor
Kendrik Imperio, Custodian
Heidi Pisano, Community Nursery School Director

The Reverend Steven A. Small, Senior Pastor is on medical leave.

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|----------------------|------------------------|
| 03 Opal Morse | 16 Linda Gray |
| 05 Paige Allain | 16 Cindy Scott |
| 05 Glenda Auciello | 17 Dr. Robert Franger |
| 06 Crew Bates | 18 Jonathan Minville |
| 06 Lena Laurin | 19 Patricia Richardson |
| 06 Timothy MacDonald | 20 Sawyer Smith |
| 07 Erika Smith | 20 Jeremy Zendzian |
| 07 Nancy Thomson | 21 Matthew Colangelo |
| 10 Rory Hoey | 22 Abigail Colangelo |
| 11 Megan Beaupre | 24 Sarah O'Connor |
| 12 Donna Raymond | 24 Rick Poland |
| 12 Phyllis Webster | 26 Haley MacDonald |
| 13 Marilyn Pendleton | 27 Susan Coviello |
| 15 Merin MacDonald | 28 James Hall |