



Herald of Good TIDINGS

“Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, ‘Behold your God!’”
~ Isaiah 40:9

New Year

2 Esdras 4 Then I answered and said, “How long? When will these things be? Why are our years few and evil?” 34 He answered me and said, “Do not be in a greater hurry than the Most High. You, indeed, are in a hurry for yourself, but the Highest is in a hurry on behalf of many.”

One thing I have heard a lot this year is, “I can’t believe in 2016 we still have to put up with _____,” where _____ is something the speaker believes should have ended in the Dark Ages. The world, it seems, is not changing fast enough or might even be going in the wrong direction. The theme of 2016 was people losing patience.

It has been a hard year. The election campaign was one of the meanest of my lifetime, though not historic in its meanness. The two candidates for president from the two major parties were shown in poll after poll to be the most disliked pair of candidates since polling started. Each candidate had their supporters, but the news told us time and again that “none of the above” would be the overwhelming choice if it was an option on the presidential ballot. Yet one of those disliked candidates was going to be president. It, of course, turned out the polling was wrong about who would be president. The polls all had Clinton winning, but they were wrong. Could they be wrong about how disliked the candidates were?

The year had many deaths, many terrorist attacks, and many natural disasters. The war in Syria and the refugee crisis got worse. A hurricane hit Haiti, a nation still recovering from an earthquake. 2016 seemed to have a lot of tragedy and few bright spots.

No matter how bad it was, there were still good things happening. Babies were born to loving families. Employees were promoted. People did good works. They helped those in need. They worked to make the world a little better. The crime rate in America continues to be at the lowest level it has been in my lifetime.

But those stories don’t get told on the TV news. There is no one to write the “life is pretty much the same as it has ever been, maybe a little better” story. Stories are told about what is not normal. That is why the news is interested in crime, war, and car crashes. Those things don’t happen all the time, so it draws our attention.

Will 2016 go down in history as the worst year ever? Certainly not. But if enough people think it was a bad year, maybe we can all work to make 2017 a better year.

God has a plan. We can wish like Esdras that God would work faster, but that is not going to help. What can help is doing the little things that together add up to big changes. Patience is always needed.

God is working in the world. How can we help?

God bless you,
Pastor Brian



Important Notice:

The Annual Meeting will be held here on **Saturday, January 21st, at 2 p.m.** (All committee/board end-of-year reports are NOW due.) The **Installation of Officers and Committees** will be during worship on **January 22nd.** The **All Committee Meeting** will be on **Monday, January 23rd, at 7 p.m.**

2017 Offering Envelopes

Please pick up your 2017 offering envelopes located at the church in the back of the sanctuary. If you can't find your envelopes, it means you did not make a pledge or didn't indicate that you wanted envelopes. Please see Lori or Nick Stockhaus with any questions.

2016 Pledges

Please note that donations received in the office before Jan 1st will show up on your 2016 donation statement. In addition to this, any donations received by mail after Jan 1st may be included on your donation statement if the letter is postmarked on or before December 31st. Any donations postmarked after December 31st will appear on your 2017 donation statement. 2016 donation statements will be available starting January 21st. Thank you!

Happy Birthday to:

Lillian McPherson ~ 1/19/96
Cassandra Stockhaus ~ 1/23/99



We would like to acknowledge your special occasion in the *Tidings* — just complete a birthday/anniversary form located on the table in Fellowship Hall or call 508-832-2845 to have a form mailed to you.

Coffee Hour Hosts:

1/1 Music Committee	1/8 Prudential Committee
1/15 Board of Trustees	1/22 The Shoblom Family

Please note: a new coffee hour schedule will be distributed at the All Committee Meeting on Monday, January 23rd.

SERMON TITLES

1/1	“The Innocents”
1/8	“Baptism of Jesus”
1/15	Cliff to preach
1/22	“Who Was the First Disciple?”
1/29	“With What?” — children’s sermon “Blessed”

The final numbers are in . . .

As a result of generous church support, \$7,219.50 was raised through the Pumpkin Patch Fair fundraiser!

Our thanks to everyone who made this possible and special thanks to Cindy Ryan, Judy Murphy, and Diane Moore for all their hard work!

Youth On a Mission would like to thank everyone who participated in the annual cookie walk. Thank you to those who baked and to those who bought! This fundraiser resulted in \$472 for the youth group!

HANDBELLS RING AGAIN!

Yes, our handbells, silent since 2002, peeled again on Sunday, December 11th. We performed two pieces, an arrangement of *Amazing Grace* and an *Antiphonal Noel* which was done with our choir and the piano. Our group is composed of prior ringers, some with other music experience, those with no experience, and those who cannot read music at all.

Do you fit into one of these categories? Interested in learning more about the handbells and ringing artistry? On Sunday, January 15th, at 3:00 PM we will host a dual program: review and selection of the pieces for now through June and a chance for those interested in the bells to drop by and get acquainted with our program. Not only do we produce music, but we have a great time together! We invite you to join with us on this date. We always have room for more ringers. If we should be so rewarded with interest, we can investigate adding another octave to our set of bells.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me.

Herb Mower, 88 Masonic Home Road T106, Charlton, MA 01507

508-434-2864 mower@alum.mit.edu

Once again your generosity is overwhelming. Thank You for the Christmas gift. It is greatly appreciated.

Pastor Brian

Playground Toy Drive for Columbus Park School through January 8th

There is a collection box in Fellowship Hall for playground toys for Columbus Park School in Worcester. The children are in need of the basics: basketballs, soccer balls, jump ropes, wiffle balls and bat, sidewalk chalk, etc. Please help us bless these children with basic playground equipment. We will be collecting through 1-8-17. **Thank you.**

POTLUCK SUPPERS & MOVIE/BOOK DISCUSSION TIME

Our monthly potluck supper get-togethers, also known as "Spirit Suppers," continue. The potlucks begin at 5:30 p.m. on movie nights with the movie viewing during dinner, and discussion to follow at its conclusion. On book discussion nights, the potluck begins at 6:00 p.m. with the book discussion beginning at approximately 6:30-6:45 p.m. You do NOT have to read the book, if you just want to come for food and fellowship, please do!



On Tuesday, January 17th, at 6 p.m. we will be discussing the Old Testament book of the Bible, Ruth.

On February 21st at 5:30 p.m. we'll view the movie, *Miracles from Heaven*, based on the incredible true story of the Beam family. When Christy (Jennifer Garner) discovers her 10-year-old daughter Anna (Kylie Rogers) has a rare, incurable disease, she becomes a ferocious advocate for her daughter's healing as she searches for a solution. After Anna has a freak accident, an extraordinary miracle unfolds in the wake of her dramatic rescue that leaves medical specialists mystified, her family restored, and their community inspired.

So, mark your calendars and plan to join us!

January Tidings from Here We Grow Preschool



With January here, we have started to bundle up. If the weather is too cold outside, we will be having our gross motor time in the vestry. The children love it!

We had our Christmas programs on December 21st and 22nd. The 3-year-olds had wonderful sing-a-longs in their rooms with friends and family. The 4-year-olds had their concerts in the morning and afternoon. A great time was had by all, and parents were very generous with the goodies for our 4-year-old parties.

We collected toys in partnership with the Auburn Police Department. Family support was great; we filled our large box 3 times.

Our enrollment forms have gone out in-house and we are already filling some classes. We will have in-house open enrollment until the beginning of February, then we will open it up to new parents and children. If you know of anyone looking for a preschool, we would be happy to hear from them.

Starting in February we will be doing our calendar fundraiser. We pick prizes every day in March. Small businesses have been our best venue. Thanks to all.

We wish everyone a Happy New Year from the Here We Grow Staff.

Gina Basili, Director, **Here We Grow** Preschool

Dear Pastor Brian,

Thank you for surprising us with a Christmas basket. Our thanks, too, to all who packed this basket filling it with special gifts, even including a Church plate. We enjoyed all the delicious treats! It was so nice to have the visit with you, Amanda and MacKenzie.

Lee & Bob Fenby

From the Church Secretary

Thank you so very much for all the thoughtful ways you remembered me this Christmas. Each year, as you are so generous to me, I struggle to convey my deep appreciation for all of you.

May the Lord richly bless you for being such a blessing to me!

Denise

**Tidings 2017
Subscription Renewal Form**

In an effort to offset the costs of publishing the monthly *Tidings*, we are asking for members and friends to support a voluntary subscription.

Your participation is entirely optional and will not affect whether or not you receive the *Tidings*.

Annual Renewal - (10 issues, no July or Aug. issue)

Please enclose a check or money order for \$10 payable to: **First Congregational Church**. Please write "**Tidings**" in the memo section.

Thank You!

Mail to: First Congregational Church
128 Central St., Auburn, MA 01501

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Please call the Church office with any questions, 508-832-2845.



Happy New Year!

Happy New Year! Here's to good health for all.

January is Cervical Health Awareness Month, National Birth Defects Prevention Month, National Blood Donor Month, and National Glaucoma Awareness Month.

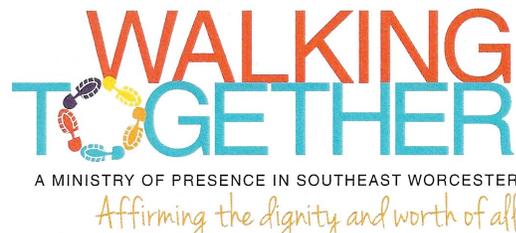
Please consider donating blood. If you are a regular donor, that's great. If you have never donated and are considering, please make the commitment. I will go with you for support. It doesn't take much time, and it is truly needed.

Thank you to all who use and donate items to the closet. I am going to go through the closet soon to try and clean it out. It has helped many people, and I'm thankful for that.

God Bless!

Debbie Pranaitis
Parish Nurse
Cell #: 508-612-4521

Ms. Deborah Pranaitis, Chair of the Outreach Committee
First Congregational Church of Auburn
128 Central Street
Auburn, MA 01501



Dear Deborah and Committee and Church Members,

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Walking Together and our Executive Director, the Rev. Meredyth Ward, to convey our profound gratitude for your generosity in making a \$20,000 gift from the Sibley fund to the work we are doing in southeast Worcester.

As you know, we are a relatively new ministry, operating on a tight budget. But we are experiencing the miracle of the loaves and fishes each and every day in this ministry of presence in a part of our city that is, to too many, invisible. Through twelve-step programs, Laundry Love, English as a second language programs and simply by being good neighbors, we are amazed on a daily basis of what God is able to do when we make ourselves available.

Thank you for being our partners in this important work.

Faithfully,
The Rev. Canon Richard M. Simpson
Secretary for the Walking Together Board



Please pray for Alice and the Carlson family due to the recent loss of Alice's husband, Gus.

Gustaf A. Carlson, 94, longtime Auburn resident, died Sunday, November 27, 2016 surrounded by his loving family in the Life Care Center of Auburn. He was born in Worcester, son of the late Carl H. and Sophia (Wigren) Carlson. He attended Worcester schools. He served in the United States Army during W.W. II throughout Europe and was a POW.

Gustaf had worked for Norton Company as a Crane Operator for over 15 years before he retired. He enjoyed several hobbies including boating, fishing, doing yardwork, and he was an avid Red Sox follower.

He leaves his loving wife, Alice K. (Jamieson) Carlson; a son, Wayne G. Carlson and his wife, Jill; a daughter, Barbara A. MacIntosh and her husband, Thomas; three grandchildren—Gregory and Amanda Carlson and Corey MacIntosh; a goddaughter, Sheila Conroy; as well as several nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by two sisters, Alice O'Connell and Helen Martin, and a brother, John Carlson.

A funeral service was held on December 1, 2016 at Britton-Wallace Funeral Home. Burial was in Hillside Cemetery, Auburn. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the First Congregational Church, 128 Central St, Auburn.

"I am the resurrection and the Life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies."

John 11:25

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Happy New Year!

I can't believe that another year has passed and we are starting new with a year full of surprises ahead. As we look ahead to the new year, let us think of ways we can share the love of God that is so freely given to us. We receive love from our Father without conditions attached. Are we also sharing love without attaching conditions?

We are growing in Sunday school and continue to need teachers or assistants to help. I have a sign-up sheet that is until the end of the school year, as does Shannon Hartmann. Please prayerfully consider stepping in and finding out what goes on downstairs, I am sure you will be amazed at how much the kids know.

Youth on a Mission (YOM) is open to **anyone who is in 6th grade or above**. Please keep an eye on the bulletin and if you would like to be on our group e-mail list, please give me your information. We will have a **mandatory meeting, with at least one parent present, on January 8th in the green room after service** (approx. 11:15). We need to discuss the future of YOM and what the rest of the year looks like.

I want to thank everyone who helped out with the cookie walk, I do not have totals* as of yet, but we usually have good luck with this fundraiser. Looking toward spring, we will again be selling butter braids and cookie dough for Easter.

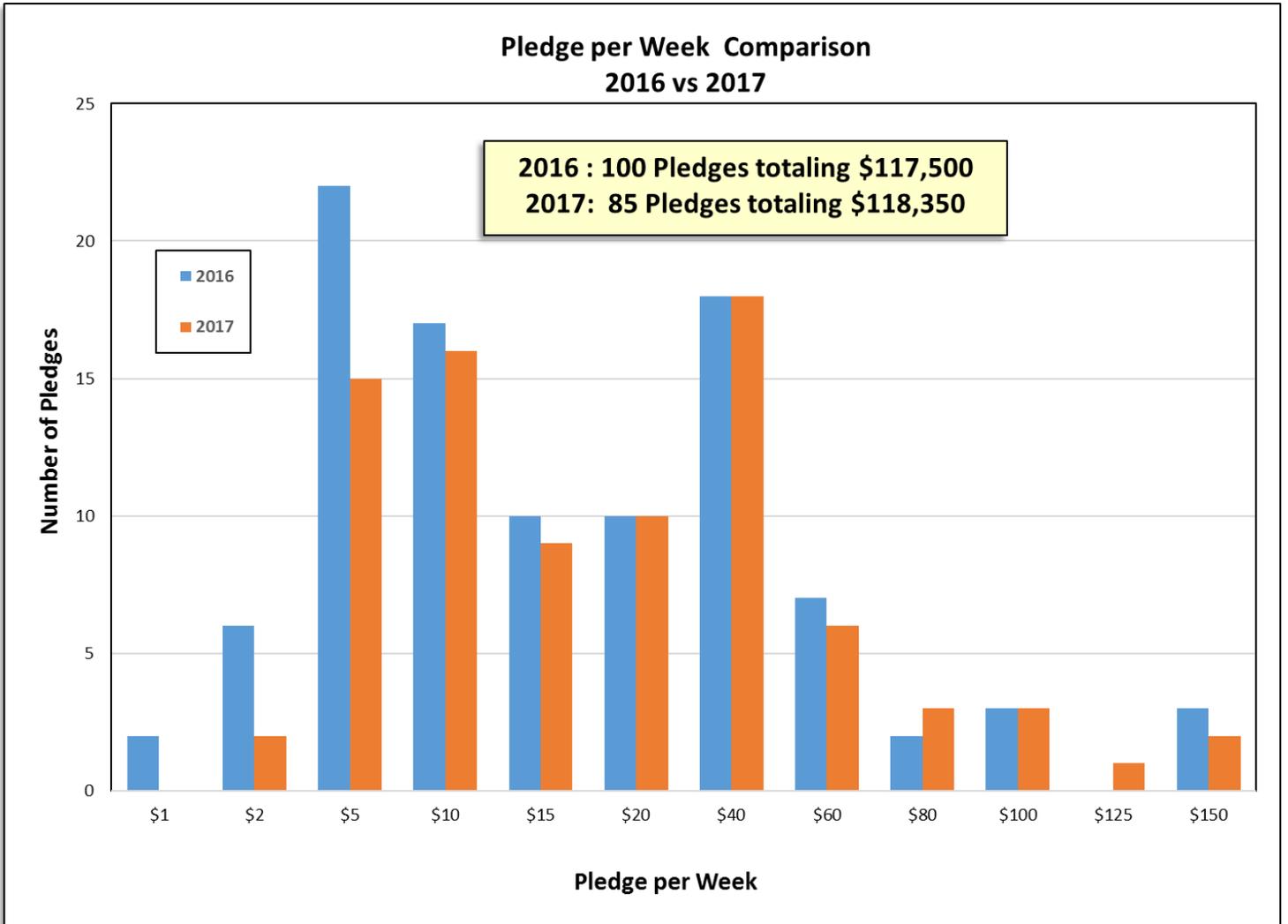
Thank you to all who help in making the Sunday school a success. Our teachers, Mike Schillinger, Shannon Hartmann, Theresa Stone, and Tricia Gervasi are very dedicated and we would not have Sunday School without them. I also want to thank the few parents who have stepped up to assist and even as a "floater" you are keeping our kids safe. Thank you all.

May 2017 bring you a year full of joy, happiness and dedication to God.

FAITH is not believing that God can, it is knowing that He will.

Jean McPherson
Director of Religious Education

*Editor's note: the cookie walk raised \$472 for YOM. Thank you to all who participated!



At the December Here We Grow Board of Directors meeting we learned of Gina Basili’s decision to resign. Gina is the current Director of Here We Grow. Gina has come to realize she prefers being with the children in the classroom rather than serving in an administrative capacity. Below is the job posting.

DIRECTOR OF HERE WE GROW PRESCHOOL

This position oversees the administration of the Here We Grow preschool program in accordance with state requirements and policies set forth by the Here We Grow Board of Directors.

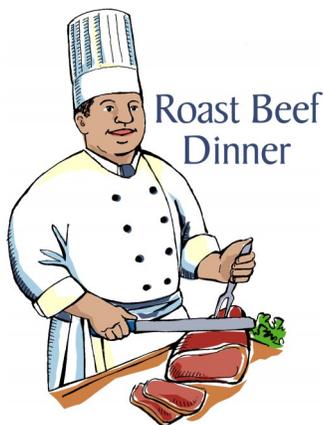
Qualifications include Department of Early Education and Care Director I Certification, a strong educational background, and applicable experience in the field.

Position requires approximately 34 hours a week for 10 months per year.

Send resume to:

Here We Grow Board of Directors, 128 Central Street, Auburn, MA 01501

Please call 508-832-2845 with any questions.
A detailed job description is available upon request.



COMMUNITY SUPPER

Saturday, January 14th, at 5 p.m.

Please join us for a delicious roast beef supper.

Adults \$10 Children 10 & under—free

(Volunteers to help serve are needed and appreciated!)

Please support this church fundraiser either by joining us for supper, by helping with the supper, or both!

TIDINGS is a monthly publication of

**First Congregational Church,
United Church of Christ
128 Central St., Auburn MA 01501**

Phone: (508) 832-2845

Office Hours: Mon.-Fri. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Email: secretary@auburnfirstucc.org
or PastorBrian@auburnfirstucc.org

*God's church in Auburn Center
doing Christ's work in the world.*

Web: auburnfirstucc.org



BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Non-Profit Org.
Permit No. 6
Auburn, Mass

January 2017

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

OR CURRENT RESIDENT