



The First Congregational Church of Reading

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST • AN OPEN AND AFFIRMING CONGREGATION

Produced by our Church Family

February 2011

Volume 2011, Issue 2

February First ChurchNEWS

Statement of Purpose

We gather as a faith community to love and magnify God. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we will love our neighbors as ourselves, advocating for peace and justice. We will go out and share our faith in Christ, inviting others to join us. We will be nurturers of the spirit and teachers of the Word. We will welcome and provide sanctuary to all.

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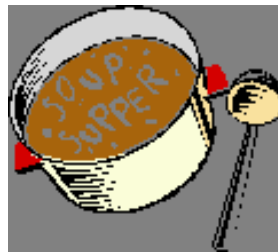
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As gardeners of the spirit, we provide fertile soil to nurture both church and community, harvesting faith, compassion, and understanding of God's love, as taught by Jesus Christ.

Welcome!

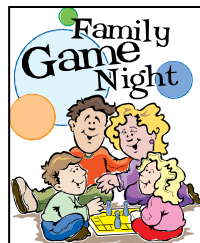
At FCCR, you will find joyful hearts, open minds and a caring community. If you are a long-time church member, seeking a new spiritual community, or brand new to the very idea of "church"...if you are young or have young children or are mature beyond your years...if you are single, married, partnered, divorced, widowed, or in transition...no matter who you are, at FCCR, you are welcome to join us in celebrating God's love, sharing warm welcome, and offering sanctuary for all.

Soup Supper—Tuesday, February 8th



Back by popular demand, Soup Suppers will begin on February 8th from 6-7:15 in Dining Hall. Our second supper will be combined with Ash Wednesday services, and subsequent soup suppers will take place weekly during Lent. All are welcome. If you would like to bring salad, soda, dessert or bread to share please do, but this is not necessary. Any questions contact Joan Kingston, 944-0533 or Laurie Tucker, 944-6786.

Game Night—Saturday, February 12



Are your kids full of jumping beans this time of year? Do you feel the need to get out of the house and have some fun with the kids? If so, come to Family Fun Night at the church on Saturday February 12 from 5-8 pm. Bring your favorite games and come join us along with other FCCR families and friends for a fun filled evening of pizza and games. In addition to playing board games, we will try out a few group activities to get the wiggles out. You can just show up or even better, you can let either Lesley Kerr (lesley.kerr@comcast.net) or Amy Imrich (aimrich@hsph.harvard.edu) know that you are planning to come. We hope to see you there.

Church Contact Information:
Office Phone: 781-944-0205

www.churchofreading.org
Office Email: office1.fccr@verizon.net

Dear Friends,

On Sundays in worship lately, we've been reading the stories of Jesus inviting his first disciples to join him. In the gospel of John, Jesus says ... "come and see" what I am doing in God's name" and in Matthew he calls them with the line, "Follow me and I will show you how to fish for people."

In our day and time, God continues to invite people to engage in the life of faith and in sharing with and serving others. That means that in some way, great or small, perceptible or imperceptible, God is inviting each one of US to be part of something bigger than ourselves.

This is one of the many challenges that we are also exploring through the confirmation program. As we learn more together about the Bible, Jesus, Christian history and the church, confirmands are discovering all kinds of new information and ideas, and these are changing what they think about God, the world and maybe even themselves. It is great fun to be with them in this process, and an amazing experience to hear them talk about their lives and reflect on what they believe. I am continually inspired and wonder what invitations God may extend to these 17 young people!

Being with them has prompted me to think about their parents, mentors, and all us other folks who may be involved with church, but haven't had an opportunity for learning and growing spiritually lately. So, during March and April, I'll be offering adult sessions on Sunday afternoons from noon to 1 pm that I'm calling "Re-Confirming Our Faith!" The sessions will be designed to stand alone individually, but cover a range of material so that they compliment each other together. So, once again, you may come once or to all the sessions, as you are able. We will begin on Sunday, March 13th, and subsequent sessions will be held on March 27, April 3 & 10. Mark your calendars now, watch for further details, and let me know if you are interested in participating!

I look forward to this time to come together and see what God will do in our midst!

Blessings,

Lisa

A Vacation Note from Rev. Lisa

I will be away on vacation in Florida from Thursday, Feb. 10th until Saturday, Feb. 19th. If you have a pastoral need during this time, please call the office during regular business hours or call one of our Deacons. Rev. Chad William Kidd will be preaching on Sunday, Feb. 13th. I will be back leading worship on Sunday, Feb. 20.



A Note of Thanks!

Many thanks to all who made gifts to the Special Epiphany Offering to support the needs of families in our church! More than \$600 was raised. Some of that money went to help a family that otherwise would not have been able to have Christmas presents. The family sent a lovely thank you note to Rev. Lisa, including these phrases "...You really helped us out so much at Christmas." "We have been blessed by our church family!" and "We hope we can help someone else in need someday." The remainder of the collection will be used through the winter at the discretion of the Deacons and/or Rev. Lisa to help in additional cases of need.



Small Group Spiritual Growth

You are invited to join us in forming a small group focused on spiritual growth. We will meet monthly through June starting on Monday, February 7 at 7:00 p.m. at Kathleen Taylor's home. The group will be facilitated by Cathy Zeek, and we will use the first section of Companions In Christ, which will be available at church. Light refreshments will be served. Please RSVP by Tuesday, February 1 if you are interested so we can order texts. Contact Laurie Tucker, tuckerlandb@yahoo.com, 781-944-6786, with your response or with any questions about the small group.



Dates for Upcoming Youth Events, Heifer Sunday

Be sure to mark your calendars for the following youth events. And even though it is still a few months away we are already making plans for Heifer Sunday on March 20. We hope to see you there!

- Feb. 6 – Jr. Youth going to see Tron at Jordan's Furniture Imax
- Feb. 13 – Sr. Youth meeting in the Youth Room after worship
- Feb. 27 – All Youth event (including Jr. Youth, Confirmation, and Sr. Youth)
- March 20 – Heifer Sunday



If you would like to add yourself to either the Jr. Youth or Sr. Youth email list and have not done so already, or if your email address has recently changed, please drop me an email request at bhuggins@bu.edu and I will add you to the group.

Grace and peace,

Blake Huggins
Director of Children's and Youth Ministries

Church School Undercover!

Every wonder what goes on in a church school class? Here is your chance to find out, with no obligation. An assistant teacher is needed to help one of our veterans in the 1st & 2nd Grade for the next few Sundays.

You can pick from the following dates: February 6 and 13 and March 6 and 13.

If interested (and we hope you are!) please contact Lesley Kerr or Betsy Schneider, or the church office. Thank you!

Confirmation Update

The Confirmation Group will meet on Sunday, Feb. 13th at 6:00 pm with special guest leaders Anastasia and Chad Kidd. We are also working on scheduling visits to other places of worship during the next month – watch for updates!

All confirmands are also encouraged to join in the All Youth Event on Sunday, Feb. 27th—snow permitting, sledding may be on the agenda!



2011 Stewardship Campaign Ramping up soon

The 2011 Stewardship Campaign will be ramping up soon, starting in mid February and ending in early April. Look for some changes this year, as we are retiring the Pony Express. Look for some things to remain the same.

Right now we ask you to begin to think about what you can pledge and contribute to support God's work in our congregation and our community. Ultimately, your contribution is your response to God's generosity to you.

First Congregational Church of Reading asks for your pledge to support our congregation's work in our community. Of course, contributions to the church are always welcome, but pledges help us to prepare our budget and to plan the programs and activities that we will be able to offer in the coming year.

During this campaign, expect to hear more about what our ministries have accomplished. It is important for you to be informed about what FCCR has been able to accomplish as a congregation, for our community, and in the world. You have a right to know that your contributions are being used responsibly and constructively and that they are making a difference.

If you have questions or would like to participate on the Stewardship Committee, please contact David Zeek at d.zeek@computer.org or through the church office.

Getting Together in January—Visioning Retreat and Congregational Meeting

Congregational Meeting



On the Visioning Retreat held at the church on Saturday, January 8, a dozen people gathered to talk about...visioning. Some of those attending were members of the Visioning team, and quite a few were not. At the end of the morning, we felt comfortable about setting some specific actions for the year. We will present them at the Informational Meeting, January 30th, and report back next month on how that went.

We were able to set an overall goal: Create opportunities in our faith community to nurture both social and spiritual relationships.

And some specific actions:

- Schedule a spiritual nurturing evening small group ministry
- Schedule an early morning spiritual nurturing small group ministry
- Arrange an adult mission trip
- Schedule monthly soup suppers
- Develop a social activity for families of young children
- Continue the periodic Sunday spiritual nurturing after church

You may notice that announcements of a few of these are included in this newsletter.

Please contact any member of the Visioning team if you are interested in working on any of these actions.

Linda Ananian

Centennial Committee Prepares to Plan for May

The Centennial Celebration Committee will soon be at work again, planning for the Open House and Special Worship Service on Sunday, May 1, 2011. Current total receipts toward the Centennial Celebration Fund are \$6900- Thank you all who contributed! Expenses were approximately \$2500- \$2800 for the October 31 luncheon and historical displays, so we have approximately \$4000 to use for the May 1 event. More details to follow!



In Case of Inclement Weather



*Inclement
Weather
Policy*

Just a reminder that we have a system set up in case a Sunday Church Service should need to be cancelled.

- Channel 4, WBZTV, WBZTV NewsRadio 1030 & WBZ.com
- Channel 5 WCVB
- Channel 7 (NBC) & Channel 56 (CW)
- RCTV

Tuesday Adult Bible Study

In mid January this group began exploring the book of Acts in the New Testament. Any interested persons are more than welcome to join the group. We meet from 1:30 to 3:00 every Tuesday afternoon. For more information, speak to Rev. Lisa.





Breakfast and Worship on Circle Sunday, February 6

An invitation to all women of the Church Please join members of CVF as we celebrate the contributions of all "Women of the Church" that take place in so many ways. Circle Sunday Potluck Breakfast will be held on Feb. 6th at 8:30 am in the Dining Hall. Circle members are asked to bring fruit, breads, casseroles, coffee cakes, etc. to share. Coffee and tea will be provided. A short informational meeting will be held and cookbooks will be sold. The worship service will end with the singing of Sarah's Circle. Members are asked to sit with their circles.

Cookie Walk, February 13

Looking for the perfect gift for your Valentine? Are you missing those Christmas cookies? Look no further than the Cookie Walk that will be held during Coffee Hour on February 13th. For \$4 you can fill a plate or a Chinese Food take-out container with a dozen cookies. They will be all set to give as a gift or to enjoy yourself. **Everyone** in the Church is invited to bake cookies for this festive affair. Bring them to the kitchen before worship that Sunday.

Antique Appraisal Morning, April 16

Save the date of April 16 to have your antiques appraised. Gerald Herook, an experienced appraiser, will appraise your treasures and share his stories as we enjoy coffee and crumpets in the Dining Room. We will start at 10:00. The cost is \$5 per item, or 3 items for \$10.

Looking ahead

Plant Swap, May 21st

Breaking Bread Together for 100 Years

Yes, it is almost here! The CVF Cookbook is in its final stages of prep and soon to be published. There are over two hundred recipes from past and present Church members, many which have been enjoyed at Church functions through the years. At Coffee Hour and other events, we are spotlighting food whose recipes are in the cookbook. Wait till you see what shows up at the Cookie Walk!...and Soup Nights! Hungry yet? Well don't wait any longer. You can reserve a cookbook during most coffee hours between now and April, at the CVF Breakfast on Feb. 6, and actually buy one at the Centennial Celebration on May 1st. Call Mary Ann Higgins also to reserve one—617-347-8346.



Gratitude Board to Accompany Soup Suppers

At our recent Saturday morning Visioning retreat we considered a glass with some water in it. Was it half full? Was it half empty? The point of the question was that we operate best when we see the glass/life/church community as half full - or better! When we appreciate what we have, we find ourselves energized to do more good things - for God, for our church, for our community.

One of the things we discussed was the return of Soup Suppers which you'll read about on page 1. Now we have an idea to continue the theme of seeing our "cup of blessing" as half full: posting an easel at the entry to the supper on which folks would be invited to record a particular gratitude that day. It might be for having had help from a friend at school; it might be to express gratitude for safe travel on a snowy or rainy day; it might be gratitude for a special blessing that day. We'll be collecting the gratitudes each month and sharing them in our newsletter - in hopes that even more reasons to give thanks may spring forth...filling that cup to overflowing!

On Sunday, February 6th, 1:00-2:15 PM, Saskia Bergmans of Studio Om will lead us in a free introductory yoga class for everyone – beginner to experienced, all ages welcome. Saskia will ease us through a 75 minute class, stretching and moving through yogic postures in ways that feel good to the whole body. We will break down one or two of the asanas (poses) for a deeper experience. We finish the class with savasana, to fully allow the body, mind and emotions to settle and relax. Wear comfortable clothes such as sweat pants and t-shirt. Meet in the Youth Room (behind the stage on the lower level). There will be additional classes on Sundays at 1:00 if there is interest. Contact Joann Sanford, 781-944-7805 or jo.take@verizon.net, with any questions.

Emmaus Linen Drive

Blankets and pillows and sheets, oh my! The Mission Ministry is organizing a bedding drive for the residents of Emmaus House, and also for the residents of the eight other housing units run by Emmaus, Inc. in Haverhill. Most of you are familiar with Emmaus House, the family emergency shelter that serves up to 15 families at one time. But Emmaus, Inc. provides many more beds beyond those. Its Bethel Transitional Apartments provide transitional housing and case management to formerly homeless women and their children. Families live in their own apartments for up to 2 years while they participate in job training and learn to be self sufficient. The Columbia Park Apartments consists of 32 affordable apartment units that are rented to community members at market value. Emerson Street Apartments offers 12 units of per-

manent independent housing for homeless disabled individuals. Gilead House is a supportive transitional residence for mentally ill adults who are recovering from substance abuse. Residents have their own rooms and share a kitchen and common room. Jericho House provides six units of Safe Haven supportive housing program for chronically homeless men and women. The program targets individuals living with severe mental illness and/or addictions. Mitch's Place is a year-round emergency overnight shelter for single men and women. Finally, the Winter Street Apartments consist of six newly renovated apartments that provide affordable permanent housing to homeless disabled women.

Donations can be left in the Mission Ministry collection box outside the church office.

Thank you, all!

Items needed include:

Pillows (NEW only); **TWIN sheets, pillowcases, mattress covers and blankets** (new or used, Emmaus has only twin beds); **towels, washcloths and bath mats** (new or used); **crib sheets, blankets and mattress covers** (new or used); **shower curtains** (new or used)

“Race to Nowhere”

On Tuesday night, January 25th I went to RMHS to see *Race to Nowhere*. The film, an unscripted documentary featured parents, students, teachers, administrators and psychologists. All focused on today's pressure on children to achieve – leaving little time for play, creative endeavor, or family time. There were many examples given of the ways in which children – even in grammar school – feel pushed by well-meaning parents who want them to have a choice about what they do later in life, or so they can have opportunities that the parents did not.

At the end of the film there was a time for people in the audience to speak, commenting on those aspects of the film that resonated with them, raising concerns about school life and pressures here in Reading. I was delighted that several RMHS students stepped up to the microphone and spoke.

Parents also offered comments. One of the offerings near the end of the evening encouraged a change in approach to talking with children about their aims for college; it seems that the looming concern of college applications is the massive motor pressing on everyone in the school system (even more than acceptances!). It was this: rather than encouraging kids to strive for the “best” school/job, let's encourage them to strive for the “right” school/job for them.

If you didn't get a chance to see the film, ask around at church—there were a number of FCCR folk there. Our children are our most valuable resource; they are the future. Help them find the time, *engage with them* in that time, to consider their special gifts and how they fit as an important part of God's creation.

gay williams

Since the construction of our present church in 1910, the congregation has seen the completion of its plan to depict the significant events in the life of Jesus Christ in its stained glass sanctuary windows.

The nine windows in the sanctuary depict the events as follows:

Incarnation: The Nativity Scene, starting in the right transept, shows the Baby Jesus in the center, with the shepherds to the left and the three kings to the right. It was dedicated in 1954 to the memory of James Grimes.

Baptism: Shows the Lord receiving the Sacrament. John the Baptist is in the right panel, and an attendant angel to the left. Dedicated in 1965 to the memory of James W. and Allie G. Killam.

Communion: The Last Supper shows Christ with the Sacraments and the Disciples grouped around. Dedicated in 1965 to the memory of Charles F. and Florence W. Trevor.

Christ as Teacher and Healer: Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount" is shown in the center panel, with the multitudes left and right. Dedicated in 1967 to the memory of H. Raymond Johnson, Kenneth J. Spurr and Robert H. Hodson.

Faith, Hope and Love: Faith is shown in the form of a Cross in the left panel, Hope in the form of an anchor in the right, and the center panel depicts Love carried by an angel. These narthex windows are the composite of fifteen separate memorials.

Christian Life: Presents the life of Christian Commitment, where Jesus blesses the marriage at Cana to the left, blessing the children in the center, and the widow's offering at the Temple to the right. Dedicated in 1967 to the memory of Virginia Arthur, H. Hector, May E. Beaton, and Charles and Christine Cox.

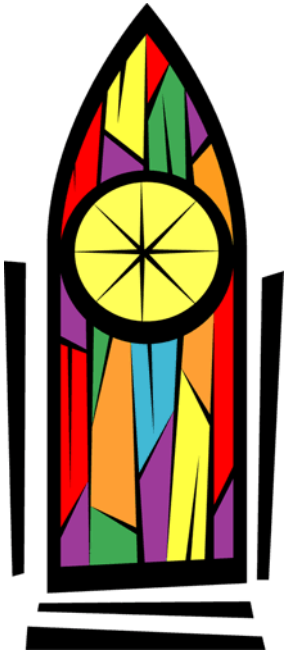
Crucifixion: Christ on the Cross is shown as Prophet/Priest/King in the center, with the Apostle John to his right, the three Marys in the left panel, and in the right, the three who attended Jesus' last earthly hours. Dedicated in 1958 to the memory of Matilda M. Torre.

Resurrection: Depicts the empty Tomb, with the Angel in the center, the two Marys to the left, and Peter and John on the right. Dedicated in 1914 to the memory of Rev. Frank S. Adams, pastor from 1880-1897.

Ascension: Shows the ascending figure of Christ in the left center panel with Saint John to the right, symbolizing our continuing commission as Christ's witnesses. Dedicated in 1977 to the memory of Dorothy C. Amon.

In addition to the sanctuary windows, other Memorials have been dedicated to the church over the years, among them the Bell in the Belltower, the sanctuary Organ, the sanctuary Altar, and the Atrium with its Schmitt Memorial Stained Glass windows.

Next month: other Memorials of the Church.



Self-Help Groups at FCCR

OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS meet in the **Music Room** on Saturday mornings, from 7:00-8:00 am, and from 10:00-11:30 am in the **Music Room**.

EMOTIONS ANONYMOUS meet on Saturdays, 10:00-11:30 am in the **Conference Room**.

AWOL OA meet on Sunday mornings, 7:00-8:30 am in **Pilgrim Hall**.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS meet on Sunday evenings, from 8:00-9:30 pm in **Pilgrim Hall**.

Thank You Notes

Dear Rev. Lisa and friends,

Thank you for your donation of chips, a case of juices, stew, mashed potatoes, mac & cheese and chicken wraps delivered by Linda Ananian. In-kind gifts of goods and services are essential to our mission. We appreciate your thoughtfulness and concern for those who are homeless. Your support helps Emmaus provide 300 people somewhere to call "home" every night in every season of the year. I have the honor of being,

Sincerely yours, Jeanne Murphy, Executive Director

Rev. Lisa,

Thanks to you and the entire church community for making JJ's baptism such a special and memorable day! Also, thank you to the creator of the beautiful blanket. We loved it! Thank you again,

Love, Jeff, JJ and Danielle Austin



Dear FCCR,

Thank you for your recent gift of 26 boxes and money for postage to the ministry of Samaritan's Purse. We are preparing to deliver the shoe box gifts to millions of children worldwide through our Operation Christmas Child project. In Haiti, where children and their families continue to suffer from the effects of the January earthquake, we are planning to distribute 250,000 shoe boxes.

We are also praying that many children will accept Jesus Christ as their Savior and will start growing in their faith through our discipleship program, The Greatest Journey. "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned" Please join us in prayer for the safe arrival and distribution of these gifts in Haiti and around the globe. May God bless you this Christmas season.

Sincerely, Franklin Graham, Samaritan's Purse.

Stage Renovation Plans – Parker Pyle, who is a Boy Scout from our Boy Scout Troop, is planning to renovate the stage in Guild Hall as an Eagle Scout project. He will be at Church on Sunday, Feb. 13th, "Scout Sunday", and will be presenting his ideas for the stage renovation during coffee hour. Please come by to meet him and give him any feedback that you might have. Hope to see you there. If you have any questions, please call Kathy Guyott at (781) 944-7617



Just what is it?? An Eagle Scout is the highest rank attainable in the Boy Scouts of America program. A Scout who attains this rank is called an *Eagle Scout* or *Eagle*. Since its introduction in 1911, the Eagle Scout rank has been earned by more than 2 million young men. The title of Eagle Scout is held for life.

Requirements include earning at least 21 merit badges and demonstrating Scout spirit, as well as service and leadership. This includes an extensive service project that the Scout plans, organizes, leads, and manages.

Daily prayers are invited for all of our friends and members-especially those who are dealing with these special joys and concerns. They and their families are most grateful for your spiritual support and cards of greeting.



Prayers for the Month of January

Following are many of the prayers shared during the past month

O God, We lift up our petitions and concerns in prayer..

- ✠ Nana who begins palliative hospice care.
- ✠ Lea's mother in ICU and her family. Pray for healing, health and support.
- ✠ My 40-year old son in law who suffered a heart attack this month.
- ✠ Maureen awaiting a diagnosis.
- ✠ Healing for Joan's mother
- ✠ Leslie and Bob Fuller's granddaughter, Ashley, recovering from surgery.
- ✠ Ben Powell, a young teen recovering from spinal surgery.
- ✠ Marsha and Barbara both recovering from surgery.
- ✠ Joanne recovering from a mastectomy.
- ✠ Robin with lymphoma.
- ✠ Ginny Davenport and Kathy Ulrich with breast cancer.
- ✠ Those dealing with cancer; David and Andy
- ✠ Kathy, who is battling ovarian cancer along with many serious complications.
- ✠ Betty Horne who was diagnosed with breast cancer.
- ✠ Ginny Potter's mother who moved to assisted living this month.
- ✠ Jane McCord's uncle who has been admitted to a nursing home.
- ✠ A teenage friend who is struggling with addiction.
- ✠ A family member who is struggling in his marriage.
- ✠ I hope that my great-grandmother feels better.
- ✠ Mom as her health continues to decline.
- ✠ World peace and justice.
- ✠ Those dealing with the Midwest tornado.
- ✠ The abolishment of hate and injustice.
- ✠ Families of those who were injured and killed in Tucson.

- ✠ Those serving in the military and their families.

O God, we lift up these celebrations and joys in prayer...

- ✠ Larry Piper's, mother's 102nd birthday Sunday the 9th.
- ✠ Newborn baby Matthew.
- ✠ Happy Birthday - Christine, Travis, Pauline, Dee, Christine, Chase.
- ✠ Len and Connie Corey's 25th anniversary this month.
- ✠ A milestone birthday!
- ✠ Congratulations to the youth involved in Coolidge smash hit "Annie".

O God, we pray for those who are grieving...

- ✠ Officer Maguire's family and community.
- ✠ For the family and friends of Peg Filistowicz, Betty Wilder's sister who passed away peacefully this month.
- ✠ Friends and family of Joan Hughes, whose memorial service was yesterday.
- ✠ The victims of the shooting in Arizona and the Congresswoman.
- ✠ For the family of William Wilson, especially Jane McCord, his niece, and his sister, Norma.

And those who are cared for at home:

Jane Rice	Peter Thorstensen
Grace Faulkner	Bill Rule
John Weston	

Please call the church office for these addresses if you would like to send a card or visit these friends.

Thanks to those who donated flowers to beautify our worship space in January

- By the people of this Church in memory of loved ones and in celebration of joys.
- In loving memory of Mr. and Mrs. Warren Killam, Jr. and Mrs. Arthur Maloney by the Honorable James W. Killam and family.
- In loving memory of all our departed loved ones by the Kingston family.
- In loving memory of Effie Conary by her husband, William Conary.



