



The Link - January 2009

Come to the Light!

“Arise, shine! Your light has come!” The prophet Isaiah’s ecstatic command ushers in a brief season of opportunity—six weeks between Christmas and Ash Wednesday. Yes, Lent begins on February 25 this year! As fast as time seems to be passing, these six weeks will be gone in the blink of an eye—unless we deliberately slow down and, as we do in Advent, remember the ‘reason for the season.’ During the weeks following The Epiphany, the ‘reason for the season’ is to go toward the light and to be ready to beckon others toward the light.

So, brew yourself a quiet cup of coffee or tea, take a deep breath, and settle back to absorb the dialog between theologians Ruth Duck and Timothy Warren. Ruth tells the story of two branches of the Mason family. One branch was always well off, and the other branch worked hard but always had to pinch every penny to make ends meet. The wealthy branch always treated the others like “poor relations”. I suspect that most of us have been in situations where we have been made to feel less experienced, less important, less worthy, less able than those who look upon us as “superiors” who seem to “have it all together and under control.”

One day, an attorney called with good news. An estranged relative from England had died and left both Mason family branches with substantial inheritances. As you can imagine, the frugal Masons were jubilant and very thankful for this turn of events. On the other hand, the wealthy Masons displayed extreme resentment, treating their cousins even worse because they felt threatened by their sudden “equality.” They took more wealth as their “due,” trying vainly to hold onto the sense of power and control that their status had previously afforded them. Ideally, the wealthy Masons should have rejoiced that their hard-working cousins had finally reached “the light at the end of the tunnel.” Rather than bringing the family branches closer together, this reaction to equality, though, tore the family further asunder.

Timothy Warren figures that the Jews reacted similarly when Paul began preaching and establishing churches among the Gentiles. After all, the Jews had always been proud to bask in the exclusive favor of the One Living God. They regarded the Gentiles, after all, as social inferiors, unclean and unworthy. It was natural that the Jews wanted to hold onto the power of Jesus for themselves at all cost, as early Christianity took hold among their ranks.

Cont. on Pg. 03

Trustees work at conserving energy and going Green

AS we all hear on a regular basis, everyone needs to do their part to help save energy, the environment and natural resources. Going Green was also a major message heard at the Annual Conference this year. The conference is encouraging every church to do their part to help.

Over 10 years ago, the Trustees worked with Massachusetts Electric and installed more efficient light fixtures through out the buildings. This was done at very little cost to us, but definitely aided us in lowering our electric bill while also helping save energy.

Also, several years ago the Trustees installed programmable thermostats for all 4 of our furnaces – Yes we have FOUR Furnaces to heat our facility. These thermostats help us maintain comfortable temperatures during building use while insuring that we are not ‘overheating’ the building.

We also have our four furnaces serviced every year to make them as efficient as possible.

Our two newest Green projects have been to replace all of the traditional light bulbs in the sanctuary with energy efficient ones. With the original light bulbs that we used, we drew approximately 1450 watts of power each time we turned on the lights. With the new light bulbs, we have lowered that use to 356 Watts – a savings of over 1000 Watts!

We have also installed plastic over all the windows in the education wing. This has helped us lower the thermostat in that wing, while eliminating the drafts that affected our heating ability and oil consumption.

Although the Trustees feel we have made great strides on this front, more must still be done. As most of you know, the trustees are a relatively small group of very busy, active people. We feel that what we really need is a GREEN TEAM dedicated to this work. This team would investigate and suggest to the trustees’ things we can do to continue our Green work. Anyone who would be interested in being part of this GREEN TEAM, please see a Trustee or Pastor Linda. This is an important part of our Church’s stewardship responsibilities, please help.

Regards,

The Board of Trustees.

New Website for New England United Methodist Men

The New England United Methodist Men have a new web site with updates on events, news, fellowship, and outreach opportunities. Visit www.neumm.org for the latest happenings with New England United Methodist Men, or contact Paul Cobb at (207) 774-5443 or cobbpk@aol.com with any questions about UMM activities or membership.

From all accounts, Biblical and historical, the Jewish Christians were as destructively resentful of the divine commandment for the Apostles to go forth, baptizing and spreading the gospel among the peoples of all nations. As surely as the attorney was reading the distant relative's will for the Masons, Paul was reading the "will" that God had given the people about how God wanted God's kingdom settled—by all peoples of the earth, every one being treated as complete equals! In a world of masters and slaves, this was understandably hard for the elites to stomach. As we approach Martin Luther King Day and celebrate the progress we continue to make on human rights issues, most of us remember the brutal and irrational resistance that the threat of equal rights that engendered violent upheaval among social and racial classes in the 1950s and 1960s, especially.

And Paul couldn't keep the secret—he was actually *doing* what the commandment required in Thessalonica, Corinth, Ephesos, Colossia, all over the place! The split between the impatient "experienced" Jewish Christians and the "non-experienced" newcomer-Gentiles who needed to be patiently nurtured and taught step-by-step took decades to resolve and quite literally nearly killed the Christian movement before it had a chance to take root.

It's human nature that people who perceive that they are in positions of authority and control have great difficulty giving it up or even sharing it equally. Fortunately, Paul was more stubbornly determined that the Good News would prevail over possessive attitudes, and the light of Christ's birth, baptism and Epiphany continues to shine for us. Christ commands us in our generation to let the light transform our attitudes, behaviors, faith--whatever it takes--so that we will be the continuation of that light for others in our nation and beyond.

Living creatures seem to need light in their lives for well-being. Dr. Julian Partridge, an animal expert from the University of Bristol, along with marine experts from the University of Aberdeen, were the first to record light-producing animals on the deep sea floor, where sunlight never penetrates. Because outside light is not available, these amazing sea creatures have learned to spontaneously create flashes of their own light. Some emit continuous flashes, others flicker only to defend themselves, and others squirt luminescent substances into the water. Scientists have long known that most fishes have eyes, but they have never understood what the fishes could have been looking at in such darkness. Now, they verify that the fish use light as a communication tool. Many of these creatures have been discovered right "under the noses" of scientists who smugly thought they already knew their local waters very well.

It occurs to me that if fishes in the deep sea can find ways to "let their little lights shine," then so can we, who have the good fortune to have the light of the sun and moon provided for us on most days. Through the example of the wonderful creatures God has put far below the sea, we can remember our ability to use the light of our personalities, charitable intentions, prayers, smiles, and knowledge of God's will for all to have salvation to serve as beacons for all those out there who are searching the world's darkness with their eyes, needing to see a flash of hopeful light to open a channel of communication. Like the scientists, we all think we know the communities and neighborhoods we live in very well. We take that knowledge for granted, while, like the deep sea creatures, neighbors with various kinds of need live "right under our noses."

I am mindful of the quotation this week in *The Grafton News* from Mark McGowan, “Our food bank partners have told us that food insecurity levels are expanding across the country as never before. The new face of hunger could be a neighbor or friend.” Identical reports are coming to me from the Food Pantry in Marlborough. Mr. McGowan said “insecurity,” which is a good by-word for the pressure all but a few families are feeling about finances, employment, retirement, health care, college costs.

By faith, I truly believe that as the social situation worsens, and all indicators are that it will for the foreseeable future, more and more people who have drifted away--and many who buried themselves so deeply in the sea of cultural denial that God’s light was lost--will finally turn back toward God’s eternal light. Light, like most substances, can be gentle or harsh. Training our light on others like a sizzling laser would not make sense. We have read God’s “will” and know that our charge is to be the gentle, encouraging light of God, a light to which attraction is joyful and comforting, like a night light to a child.

Mary must have marveled at the variety of people who followed the light to pay homage to her child. From the most angelic hosts, to the smelliest, most uneducated working shepherd, to the most sapient sage from the Orient, to the gentle farm animals who moved over to share space and forage elsewhere while the babe occupied *their* manger—all of these witnesses were uninvited and unexpected. Nevertheless, they saw the light and came toward it. And Mary welcomed them all as equals in the sight of her Son. And so must we!

Blessings of peace, diligent work, search for deeper faith and opportunities for sharing your faith an all your material possessions in the New Year....

In the Light of Christian Hope, Pastor Linda

From the Mailbag...

From Rev. Ron Wilson, District Superintendent, Holden, MA: “Congratulations to FUMC Marlborough for paying 100% of its apportionments!”

From Robin, Mikey and Laura Zaia: “Dear Church Family, I can’t thank you enough for the donation you all have made towards my National Grid bill. This has helped me out so much—you can’t even imagine. In times like these, you know who loves you and supports me, and I’ve always known it was my church family. Thank you so much once again. God bless you all.”

From Bud and Dot Wahl: “Dear Ladies of WHO: Thank you so much for the pretty Christmas basket that you made for us. You certainly show love year after year. Not only that, but you show imagination and creativity. What a variety of items! The cookies were delicious, as was the cherry-walnut cake. Notepads and calendars are always useful, and no on ever has enough stamps. Again, thank you from both of us.”

From Marlborough Community Services: “Please accept our heartfelt gratitude for your recent donation. Your contribution assists us in meeting the ongoing needs of those whom we serve through our Food pantry and Direct Services Programs. Fatinha Kerr, Executive Director.”

From Diane Fronczak: “Dear WHO members, Thank you for the thoughtful and useful Christmas basket. Happy New Year’s blessing!”

**Back by popular demand...
Children's performer, Greg Cooney!**

Please join the Trustees in welcoming back Greg Cooney for a family concert in our fellowship hall on **Monday, January 19 (snow date: 1/20) at 10:30 AM**. Mr. Cooney thrilled a sold-out crowd here last year with his lively musical and story-telling performance. We feel very fortunate to get him back this year, as we congratulate him for being a finalist for the 8th annual Independent Music Awards. We are selling tickets for just \$5 each with proceeds benefitting the Trustees' building improvement projects. Please invite everyone you know with children, especially ages 5 – 10, to come and enjoy this special treat. Tickets may be purchased in advance from any Trustee, or by calling Alyson at 508-303-5014. A limited number will also be available at the door.



Greg Cooney performance: Help Wanted

The Trustees ask for donations of child-friendly snacks and drinks to be sold during the Greg Cooney performance (see article above) on January 19. Snacks must be individually packaged with ingredients clearly labeled, due to common allergy concerns. Most welcome would be snack-size packages of pretzels, crackers, and cookies, as well as child-size juice boxes and bottled water.

Also, we will need help with ticket and snack sales during the performance. If you can help, please call Alyson at 508-303-5014. Thank you.

**TREASURER REPORT
FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH - MARLBORO
DECEMBER 2008
YEAR-IN-REVIEW**

INCOME

151% WAS MADE BY THE CONGREGATION TOWARDS PLEDGES. HOWEVER, IN TOTAL, ONLY 92% WAS COLLECTED IN REVENUE TOWARDS THE 2008 BUDGET. SPECIAL COLLECTIONS WERE BEHIND. WAS NOT A BIG PROBLEM AS WE PAID ALL OUR BILLS.

DISBURSEMENTS

WE PAID ALL OUR OPEN BILLS...YTD THRU DECEMBER.

TOTAL FOR THE YEAR, THE CHURCH PAID OUT \$ 60,322. 2% OVER BUDGET.

PASS THROUGH REPORT

PASS THROUGH ACCOUNTS ARE HEALTHY.

CONFERENCE STATUS

THE CHURCH IS DOING VERY WELL IN PAYMENT TO CONFERENCE. TO DATE, THE CHURCH IS 100% TO APPORTIONMENT. THE CHURCH PAID \$ 9,243 IN TOTAL.

IN ADDITION, THE CHURCH (THRU OUR MISSION CHAIR) MADE A PAYMENT TO CONFERENCE FOR A NUMBER OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS OVER THE YEAR. \$ 300.00 WAS SENT TO CONFERENCE THIS WAY. SEE BACKUP REPORT FOR DETAILS.

THE CHURCH IS 100% IN PAYING PASTOR LINDA'S HEALTH AND INSURANCE NEEDS, PAYING \$ 13,718 IN TOTAL.

ARTHUR BASTIAN
TREASURER – FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
JANUARY 2009

Please save the dates for the 2009 Schools of Christian Mission

Theme: "Together at the Table"

Study Topics:

Adult: Food and Faith/Sudan/Giving Our Hearts Away: Native American Survival

Youth: Food and Faith

Children: Sudan

April 18, Native American One-Day School, First UMC, Pittsfield, MA

July 17-19, University of Maine, Farmington, ME

July 24-26, Gordon College, Wenham, MA

September 17-19, Camp Aldersgate, No. Scituate, RI

Please contact Rev. Barbara Schreier, Dean, at bstks@sbcglobal.net or (860) 928-0308 or Pat Tebbetts, Asst. Dean, at patjbb@maine.rr.com or (207)773-4521 if: your group is interested in hosting a One-Day School; you are interested in leading any of the adult studies or if you know someone who would be an effective facilitator; or if you have suggestions or questions concerning School of Christian Mission.

Church Calendar January 2009

1	Thurs	7 PM	Worship at New Horizons, Communion & Covenant Renewal
4	Sun	11 AM	Epiphany Sunday Worship with Holy Communion & Sunday school
		Noon	Coffee Hour Fellowship
4	Mon	10 AM	Adult Bible Study, Reflection Room
8	Thurs	7 PM	Evening Worship at New Horizons, Remembering our Baptisms
11	Sun	11 AM	Worship, Baptism of the Lord Sunday & Sunday school
			"Invite a Friend Sunday"
		Noon	Coffee Hour Fellowship
12	Mon	10 AM	Adult Bible Study, Reflection Room
14	Wed	7 PM	Rescheduled Trustees Meeting, Meeting Room
15	Thurs	7 PM	Worship at New Horizons
18	Sun	11 AM	Morning Worship and Sunday school
		Noon	Coffee Hour Fellowship
		Noon--	Worship Committee, Meeting Room
19	Mon	10 AM	Adult Bible Study, Reflection Room
21	Wed	7:15 PM	W.H.O. (Women Helping Others), Meeting Room
22	Thurs	7 PM	Evening Worship, New Horizons
25	Sun	11 AM	Morning Worship and Sunday school
		Noon	Coffee Hour Fellowship
		Noon—	SPRC, Meeting Room
26	Mon	10 AM	Adult Bible Study, Reflection Room
		3:30 PM	Marlborough Interfaith Association
		7:15,	Administrative Board, Meeting Room
29	Thurs	7 PM	Evening Worship, New Horizons

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Address Correction Requested

Pastor Linda Stetter

