

The Spire

Informing Members and Friends - Encouraging Fellowship and Spiritual Growth

Monthly Newsletter

March 2010

A Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Sutton – Victoria Snow, Pastor

Pastor's Desk...

Have you ever had a song get stuck in your head and you just couldn't get it out? I have had the words to the "Lord of the Dance" stuck in my head for a week now. As I found myself singing these words over and over again, I began to realize that these words are wonderful for a Lenten reflection. During March we will be journeying through the holy season of Lent. Lent is a time of preparation, reflection, prayer and self examination. It is a time for each one of us to look back at the amazing gifts our Lord gave us. Jesus Christ not only shared with us the teachings of our Creator, but was also willing to die on the cross for us.

Yesterday, I was traveling in the car with my kids and asked them to tell me how their day was. At first I got the usual answers but then my children started to make a long list of complaints. One didn't like the lunch I had packed her. One didn't like the way a teacher spoke to her. One was unhappy that it was her day to have art. On and on the list went, until finally I said, "enough!" Then I asked them if they had ever thought about the hardships that Jesus endured. At first I received the old roll of the eyes and the "Oh, Mom!" response. But as I pushed further, my kids and I started to list all of the ways that Jesus overcame trouble, how he didn't give in to complaining, and the amazing gift of his sacrifice. After we listed these things, I found that the atmosphere in my car had changed. Instead of complaints there was a feeling of appreciation.

We all fall into the trap of complaining. It is so easy to do. But during this Lenten journey let us all make it our goal to appreciate the gifts of our Lord and savior. Let us open our eyes and hearts to the gifts we receive from God each and every day. And let us remember the words of this song, hoping that they will bring us new insights into the love and life of Jesus Christ. May your Lenten travels be blessed with reflection and God's love.

Peace:

Victoria

Lord of the Dance

By: Sydney Carter

(May be used as a Lenten Meditation)

I danced in the morning when the world was
begun

I danced in the Moon & the Stars & the Sun
I came down from Heaven & I danced on Earth
At Bethlehem I had my birth:

Dance then, wherever you may be
I am the Lord of the Dance, said He!
And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be
And I'll lead you all in the Dance, said He!
(...lead you all in the Dance, said He!)

I danced for the scribe & the Pharisee
But they would not dance & they wouldn't follow me
I danced for fishermen, for James & John

They came with me & the Dance went on:

I danced on the Sabbath & I cured the lame
The holy people said it was a shame!
They whipped & they stripped & they hung me high
And they left me there on a cross to die!

I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black
It's hard to dance with the devil on your back
They buried my body & they thought I'd gone
But I am the Dance & I still go on!

They cut me down and I leapt up high
I am the Life that'll never, never die!
I'll live in you if you'll live in Me -
I am the Lord of the Dance, said He!

Book of Life



Bert, Janice, Andy, John, Mary Lou, Martha, Lillian, Lester, all those who are hungry, scared, anxious, our leaders, those who are serving in our armed

services, those who find themselves in decision making positions, and all of God's children. May the light of Christ, the love of the Spirit, and wisdom of our Creator, shine brightly and call all of us to live in harmony with each other.

The Sympathies of our church family are extended to....Barbara O'Connor on the loss of her father.



Remember our Shut-ins with a note or call....

Mrs. Martha Gravelin
Lanessa Extended Care Facility
751 School St. 508-987-0496
Webster, Ma. 01570

Mrs. Louise Grundstrom 508-949-0400
Christopher Heights Rm. 290
338 Thompson Rd.
Webster, Ma. 01570

Malcolm Pearson
Beaumont Nursing Home
85 Beaumont Street
Northbridge, Ma. 01534

Mary Lou Peterson
West Sutton Road
Sutton, Ma. 01590

John Peterson
Life Care Center
Masonic Rd.
Auburn, Ma. 01501

Bert Helgerson
Overlook Rehabilitation Center
Masonic Rd.
Charlton, Ma. 01507

Janice Swindell
306 Boston Road
Sutton, Ma. 01590

Ken Grundstrom
West Main St.
Millbury, Ma. 01527

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

1st Barbara Bellville
2nd Reagan Hurley
3rd Maya Zent
4th Patricia Couture
4th Kaitlin Keddy
6th Amy Davagian
7th Tristan Mitchell
9th Stephanie Barch
9th Patricia Lyon
10th Jane Beisaw
10th Martha Gravelin
10th Kailyn Lachapelle
13th Matthew Dennis
13th Maegan Wypyszinski
15th Trent Baltzell
15th Grace Kozaczka
16th David Higginbottom
16th Matthew Stockhaus
17th Aileen Carter
18th Chase Linsley
20th Lindsay Baroud



20th Pearl Marando
 22nd Ashley Brigham
 22nd Ryan Stockhaus
 25th Bruce Larsen
 27th Rudolph Pearson
 28th Katelyn Brigham
 29th Andrew Gerr
 29th Ethan Gerr
 30th Alica Sardagnola
 31st Charlene Anderson
 31st Colin Coggins



Deepening Our Spirituality

Sundays, March 7, 14, 21

Ever wonder what it means to be "spiritual"? Ever wonder what it means to follow a spiritual practice? On Sundays, March 7, 14, and 21 from 5:00 pm-7:30 pm a gathering to discuss these topics will be held at our church. We will gather at 5:00pm for a light pot-luck dinner and time of fellowship. Coffee and punch will be provided. Families are invited to participate. Once our meal is done, the children will be invited to watch a movie and/or play board-games. A babysitter will be provided for those families who need this service. While the children are enjoying a movie the adults will go into the parlor to discuss such topics as journaling, praying, daily discipline, Lectio Divina, and other spiritual practices. We will discover how the faithful have nurtured their beliefs and deepened their relationship with God, throughout the ages. This is a wonderful opportunity to deepen your spiritual connections, deepen your ties with members of this church, explore a topic without any pressure, laugh, have fun, and participate in a Lenten program. So why not join us? There is a sign-up in the Fellowship Hall. If you are interested please sign-up or email Victoria (meandmythree@att.net) by Friday, March 5 so that a babysitter can be hired and/or food preparations may be made. Question, contact Victoria.

*Speak kind words and you
will hear kind echoes.*

Deacons News

The Sutton Food Pantry

Your continued support to the Sutton Food Pantry is greatly needed. All donations made to the pantry stay in the town. Financial donations can be made to The Friends of Sutton Elders Food Pantry Account.

They expressed a need for the following items, spam, canned turkey, canned chicken, canned ham, beef stew, spaghetti sauce, macaroni and cheese.

Also there is a need for cleaning supplies and toiletries, dish detergent, laundry detergent, soap, individually wrapped toothbrushes, paper towels and cleaning supplies.

From the Christian Education Coordinator

Rotation Mission Project

During our Lenten Rotation we will be collecting non-perishable food items for the Sutton Pantry. Please have your child bring a non-perishable food item with them to Sunday School where we will accept and bless the items.

We will also continue to collect new socks for men and women (no children's please) and small individual size toiletry items until March 14th. In past years when the confirmation class went to Boston to work and learn about the homeless people there, we found that new socks were among the most appreciated gift we could offer and there never seems to be enough of the small individual toiletry items.

Communion Education

If your child is in grades 5 or 6 and missed the Communion Education classes in third grade please let me know as I am planning a class for those children.

**Congratulations to those children
who completed the Communion
Education classes this year.**

Sam Elwell

Adam Kassatly

Tristan Mitchell

Leah Nemetz

Abigail Wren

Lora Dufresne

Lauren Arthaud

Colin Coggins



Sunday School Calendar

Feb. 21–Mar. 28 Peter Rotation: Forgiveness

March 7 Family Service and Celebration
of completion of Communion
Education

April 4 Easter Sunday – Join together in
celebration of the Resurrection of
our Lord (No Sunday School)

Confirmation Class and Senior Youth

The Confirmation Class and senior youth will be participating in Ecclesia Ministries, City Reach on March 19 – 20th. This is an opportunity to learn about homelessness from people who are homeless or who have been homeless by offering hospitality, food, and clothing. We will be going to Boston to sleep over and participate in this program. We will be distributing food and clothing to the homeless people in that area. We have been requested to bring a number of items and now ask for your help in gathering these items.

Please Help!!!!

Clothing and Other Items Needed

Please do not bring children's clothes, dress clothes, slippers, bathrobes, pajamas. Think about what you would wear camping or hiking. Such rugged, comfortable clothes are just what is needed. Also, we will have about 4 times the number of male guests as female guests, so about 80% of what you bring should be for men or unisex. Large sizes (XL, XXL, and XXXL) are very much in demand but small women's sizes are helpful also.

- All kinds of carrying cases such as backpacks, tote bags, fanny packs, small suitcases with wheels (used and in good condition)
- Toiletries such as bars of soap, shampoo, deodorant, hand and body lotion, chap stick, tooth paste, and shaving cream in small sizes, as well as tooth brushes and disposable razors.
- **New** white socks (**there can never be too many of these**)
- **New** underwear (again, there can never be too many and be sure to bring 80% of the underwear for men but women NEED them too!)
- **New** white T-shirts for men
- Sleeping bags (used or in good condition)
- **USED CLOTHING**, including:
 - Sweat shirts and sweat pants, especially hooded sweatshirts
 - Nylon jackets, ponchos and raincoats
 - Sweaters
 - T-shirts
 - Long-sleeve shirts
 - Jeans, khakis and other casual pants (80 % for men)
 - Waterproof boots, comfortable shoes, and sneakers
 - Belts

If you can help us by donating any of these items, please bring them in prior to March 14th. They can be dropped off in the Box in the Christian Education Hallway or see Deb Edgerton or one of the confirmands. We appreciate your help in this very important mission work. Thank you!!!!

Senior Youth Group

The Senior Youth Group is open to all young people in the 9th thru 12th grades. It's not too late to sign up if you are interested in joining the Senior Youth Group and attending our summer mission trip. FCCS Senior Youth Group is open to all Senior High School students, so come join us and bring a friend! We have decided that we will be going to the Newark, NY area on our mission trip this summer the week of July 18th. If you are interested in attending this mission

trip please e-mail me at
edgerton_deb@yahoo.com.

Junior Youth Group

All Youth in grades 6-8th are invited to attend the below activities. Bring a friend! Have fun! Join the gang!

1. Friday, March 12th and 13th SPRING SLEEPOVER. Meet at the church at 8:00 pm on Friday for a sleepover. Details will be announced. Please mark this date and save it now! This will be a really awesome event. Many more details to come!
2. Friday, March 26: 7-9 pm-Meet at the church to participate in the 'Flamingo Project'



We've been riding a roller coaster in the financial world, and it has not been fun. This is not a roller coaster we stood in line for and got excited about. This is a roller coaster that pulled up underneath us and took us on a wild and unwanted ride. The ups and downs are getting old, but we can't seem to get off.

We turn to financial experts and political pundits for advice, but they seem pretty confused themselves. Everybody says there is a problem in the economy, but as to how we got here – there is no unanimous answer. History books will deliver that, long after we are gone. For now, we find ourselves living in a historic moment that history has not yet defined.

Church is the place where many of you finally get off that roller coaster. In worship, you remember that you are loved by the God who created you. The familiar hymns tell you Christ's presence is constant. In scripture, stories about troubled people remind you that God is loving you through your troubles too.

Worship is not a wild ride you did not choose. It is your seat in God's house, to sit peacefully and know that God is God.

You may even decide that when you leave worship, you don't have to ride that roller coaster again. You can let it pass you by. You don't have to get back on.

This may be your chance to dust off your spiritual practices and spend more time in prayer. Listen to the call from God to be a servant. Examine your conscience for life lessons. Forgive others as you have been forgiven.

There is a lot of blame being thrown around these days, as people debate how it was that we got into this mess. I am all in favor of learning from our mistakes, but blame, in the heat of the moment, is not how we learn. This is a time to pray for wisdom and for understanding.

I have prayed for people facing job loss, for people whose retirement plans are suddenly up in the air, and for people whose bills are piling up. I have also prayed for those whose moods go up and down with the stock market, which these days make for a very long bad mood. I can't fix the American economy, but I can pray for it.

And when I pray for this country, I cannot help but pray for the rest of the world as well. There are so many people who live economically fragile lives, with so much less than we have in this country. If we feel uncertain, how must they feel? This is a key time for the church to reach out and serve others.

When our world is rocked by financial waves, we are not powerless. We can open our hearts to people more vulnerable than we are. We can pray for one another. We can still be generous, in time, talent and treasure.

Most importantly, we can look around at everything in our life that does not cost money, and treasure it.

Our economy may be rocky, but God's economy is booming.

Lillian Daniel

Tell it Like it is: Reclaiming the Practice of Testimony.

Thought for the Month



A Call to Confession:
God's design is that we would live a life of generosity and trust in him. Our enemy wants us to believe otherwise, fearing

for our finances and clinging to material things. Hear the word of the Lord:

Ecclesiastes 5:10-11 *"The lover of money will not be satisfied with money; nor the lover of wealth, with gain. This also is vanity. When goods increase, those who eat them increase; and what gain has their owner but to see them with his eyes?"*

In days of economic turmoil, we need to hear the words of scripture that call us to place our hopes beyond stock markets, unemployment checks, and paydays.

Let's confess together our need for the Lord to change our perspective

The Most Caring Child

Author and lecturer Leo Buscaglia once talked about a contest he was asked to judge. The purpose of the contest was to find the most caring child.

The winner was:

A four-year-old child, whose next door neighbor was an elderly gentleman, who had recently lost his wife.

Upon seeing the man cry, the little boy went into the old Gentleman's yard, climbed onto his lap, and just sat there.

When his mother asked him what he had said to the neighbor, the little boy just said, 'Nothing, I just helped him cry.'

What is the United Church of Christ?

The United Church of Christ came into being in 1957 with the union of two Protestant denominations: the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Churches. Each of these was, in turn, the result of a union of two earlier traditions.

■The *Congregational Churches* were organized when the Pilgrims of Plymouth Plantation (1620) and the Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony (1629) acknowledged their essential unity in the Cambridge Platform of 1648.

■The *Reformed Church in the United States* traced its beginnings to congregations of German settlers in Pennsylvania founded from 1725 on. Later, its ranks were swelled by Reformed immigrants from Switzerland, Hungary and other countries.

■The *Christian Churches* sprang up in the late 1700s and early 1800s in reaction to the theological and organizational rigidity of the Methodist, Presbyterian and Baptist churches of the time.

■The *Evangelical Synod of North America* traced its beginnings to an association of German Evangelical pastors in Missouri. This association, founded in 1841, reflected the 1817 union of Lutheran and Reformed churches in Germany.

■Through the years, other groups such as American Indians, Afro-Christians, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, Volga Germans, Armenians, and Hispanic Americans have joined with the four earlier groups. In recent years, Christians from other traditions, including the Roman Catholic Church, have found a home in the UCC, and so have gay and lesbian Christians who have not been welcome in other

churches. Thus the United Church of Christ celebrates and continues a broad variety of traditions in its common life.

Characteristics of the United Church of Christ

The characteristics of the United Church of Christ can be summarized in part by the key words in the names that formed our union: Christian Reformed, Congregational, Evangelical.

■**Christian** By our very name, the United Church of Christ, we declare ourselves to be part of the Body of Christ—the Christian church. We continue the witness of the early disciples to the reality and power of the crucified and risen Christ, Jesus of Nazareth.

■**Reformed** All four denominations arose from the tradition of the Protestant Reformers: We confess the authority of one God. We affirm the primacy of the Scriptures, the doctrine of justification by faith, the priesthood of all believers, and the principle of Christian freedom. We celebrate two sacraments: baptism and the Lord's Supper (also called Holy Communion or the Eucharist).

■**Congregational** The basic unit of the United Church of Christ is the congregation. Members of each congregation covenant with one another and with God as revealed in Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit. These congregations, in turn, exist in covenantal relationships with one another to form larger structures for more effective work. Our covenanting emphasizes trustful relationships rather than legal agreements.

■**Evangelical** The primary task of the church is the proclamation of the Gospel or (in Greek) *evangel*. The Gospel literally means the "Good News" of God's love revealed with power in Jesus Christ. We proclaim this Gospel by word and deed to individual persons and to society. This proclamation is the heart of the *leiturgia*—in Greek, the "work of the people" in daily and Sunday worship. We gather for the worship of

God, and through each week, we engage in the service of humankind.

What we believe

We can tell you more about the United Church of Christ with the help of seven phrases from Scripture and Tradition which express our commitments.

■***That they may all be one*** [John 17:21] This motto of the United Church of Christ reflects the spirit of unity on which it is based and points toward future efforts to heal the divisions in the body of Christ. We are a uniting church as well as a united church.

■***In essentials unity, in non-essentials diversity, in all things charity*** The unity that we seek requires neither an uncritical acceptance of any point of view, nor rigid formulation of doctrine. It does require mutual understanding and agreement as to which aspects of the Christian faith and life are essential.

■***The unity of the church is not of its own making*** It is a gift of God. But expressions of that unity are as diverse as there are individuals. The common thread that runs through all is love.

■***Testimonies of faith rather than tests of faith*** Because faith can be expressed in many different ways, the United Church of Christ has no formula that is a *test* of faith. Down through the centuries, however, Christians have shared their faith with one another through creeds, confessions, catechisms and other statements of faith. Historic statements such as the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Evangelical Catechism, the Augsburg Confession, the Cambridge Platform and the Kansas City Statement of Faith are valued in our church as authentic *testimonies* of faith. In 1959, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ adopted a Statement of Faith prepared especially for congregations of the United Church. Many of us use this statement as a common affirmation of faith in worship and as a basis for study.

■ ***There is yet more light and truth to break forth from God's holy word*** This affirmation by one of the founders of the Congregational tradition assumes the primacy of the Bible as a source for understanding the Good News and as a foundation for all statements of faith. It recognizes that the Bible, though written in specific historical times and places, still speaks to us in our present condition. It declares that the study of the scriptures is not limited by past interpretations, but it is pursued with the expectation of new insights and God's help for living today.

■ ***The Priesthood of All Believers*** All members of the United Church of Christ are called to minister to others and to participate as equals in the common worship of God, each with direct access to the mercies of God through personal prayer and devotion.

Recognition is given to those among us who have received special training in pastoral, priestly, educational and administrative functions, but these persons are regarded as *servants*—rather than as persons in authority. Their task is to guide, to instruct, to enable the ministry of all Christians rather than to do the work of ministry for us.

■ ***Responsible Freedom*** As individual members of the Body of Christ, we are free to believe and act in accordance with our perception of God's will for our lives. But we are called to live in a loving, covenantal relationship with one another—gathering in communities of faith, congregations of believers, local churches.

Each congregation or local church is free to act in accordance with the collective decision of its members, guided by the working of the Spirit in the light of the scriptures. But it also is called to live in a covenantal relationship with other congregations for the sharing of insights and for cooperative action under the authority of Christ.

Likewise, associations of churches, conferences, the General Synod and the church wide "covenantal ministries" of the United Church of Christ are free to act in their particular spheres of responsibility. Yet all are constrained by love

to live in a covenantal relationship with one another and with the local churches in order to make manifest the unity of the body of Christ and thus to carry out God's mission in the world more effectively.

The members, congregations, associations, conferences, General Synod, and covenanted ministries are free in relation to the world. We affirm that the authority of God as revealed in Jesus Christ and interpreted with the aid of the Holy Spirit stands above and judges all human culture, institutions and laws. But we recognize our calling both as individuals and as the church to live in the world:

- To proclaim in word and action the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- To work for reconciliation and the unity of the broken Body of Christ.
- To seek justice and liberation for all.

This is the challenge of the United Church of Christ.

<http://www.ucc.org/about-us/what-is-the-united-church-of.html>

No More Night

Palm Sunday

**First Congregational Church
Sutton**

March 28, 2010 7:00 p.m.

A concert of sacred music presented
by the choir of the First Congregational
Church under the direction of
Mr. Erik Johnson.

Dear Church Family,
Please mark your calendar and plan on coming to a night of beautiful music and reflection. The concert is a perfect way to prepare our hearts for Holy week and Christ's journey to the cross. Bring family and friends and join us for a memorable evening.

A free will offering will be taken to help stewardship. Refreshments will be served.
Thank you!



Lilies

We will again be ordering lilies to brighten our sanctuary on Easter Sunday. You may order a plant in a loved one's honor or memory. The names will be printed in the Easter Sunday bulletin.

Plants cost \$12.00 each. Please make checks out to *The First Congregational Church of Sutton* (note that it is for lilies). Fill out the form below and place in the offering plate or return to the church office.

All orders must be in by March 26th

Please print name(s) as you would like them to appear in the bulletin:

In honor of:

In memory of:

Given by:

___ I will pick up flowers after the Easter Service.

___ I will not pick up flowers after the Easter Service.

God is awake



A mother and her 4-year-old daughter were preparing for bed one night. The child was afraid of the dark, and on this occasion the mother, alone with the child, felt fearful herself.

When the light was turned off, the child caught a glimpse of the moon outside the window, "Is the moon God's light?" she asked her mom. "Yes," replied the mother. "Will God put out his light and go to sleep?" asked the girl.

"No, dear, God never goes to sleep." Then, out of the simplicity of a child's faith, the girl said something that reassured the fearful mother. "Well, as long as God is awake, there's no sense in all of us staying awake."

The pair slept well that night – and for the many nights that followed.

**The Newsletter Newsletter March 2009*

Kids Activity

PRAYER BOX

Family prayer time is a good habit. Make it fun with this activity for all family members. They can use this special box whenever they have a prayer request.

What you need:

- Shoebox
- Wrapping paper
- Scissors
- Tape
- Stickers, markers, etc. (optional)
- Index cards
- Pencils or pens

What you do:

1. Wrap the shoebox like a present. Be sure to wrap the lid separately so it can be removed.
2. Let the whole family help decorate the box. You can write Bible verses about prayer, draw pictures, glue on pictures or add stickers. Be creative!
3. Put the box in a prominent location of your house. Keep a pile of index cards and pencils or pens near the box.
4. Whenever a family member has a prayer request, he or she can write or draw it on a card and put it inside the box.
5. Family members can share the cards in a prayer circle, or people can take turns praying for all the requests. Throughout the week, family members can check the box for new prayer needs.