

Pastor's Letter



Happy New Year! After a glorious season celebrating I come into January with a holy hangover. A bit bleary eyed, a tad tired, a dull thudding between my ears, I stumble around trying to take inventory of everything that happened the season before!

On Sunday, January 28th we will gather as a congregation to do that very thing. To take inventory of our spiritual assets, and reckon with our spiritual shortcomings. When you read the annual reports I think you'll agree that our spiritual assets are formidable; certainly the stuff on which we can build a strong future as a church.

The shortcomings will require our attention, too. By addressing them honestly and head on we can work to minimize their effect on us or eliminate them. Together we can build a stronger community of faith that will have even more to celebrate next year!

Unlike faith traditions that function from the top-down, the United Church of Christ is healthiest when we have input and action from the greatest portion of our community. You represent that greatest portion. I hope you will join me on the 28th as we steady ourselves as a community and move ahead into the coming year of ministering in Jesus' name.

Aloha,

Todd

reckless prayer - a journey into the Jesus-life nexus

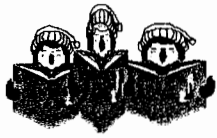
Ever wonder about this word "prayer" that people toss around so recklessly? Sometimes it's a cue to take a quick nap in the middle of a church service, or sometimes it's like a hot potato at the dinner table - someone else do it! Sometimes it's kooky, and makes you wonder about people who claim that God tells them strange things. Or maybe you want to pray but don't know how, and you're not sure how to ask people about it. Or maybe you've tried praying but God

has been aloof, distant, maybe not even there at all, and you wonder what's the deal, because you hear others describe the wonderful prayer times they're having. Perhaps it's best to just let religious people handle it after all - they must be experts at prayer, right? Or is there more to it ... ?

Over the next two months a few of us ordinary folks will be gathering together to explore and experience prayer. Whether you are a longtime prayer fan or just recently curious about prayer, please do come join us! We will explore different ways of prayer, by trying out different forms and different settings, but always with a focus on seeking God and experiencing the Jesus-life conversation. We trust and pray that these two months will introduce you to a surprisingly reckless aspect of prayer, even if you are a prayer veteran, and we know that you will find you have something valuable to teach us about prayer, even if you are a prayer novice!

We will meet in the chapel room at the parish house, exact times and dates to be determined based on your availability. If you are interested, please contact Hari Kumar (413-303-9772, hari@kumarmail.com). For more information, you can also check out Hari's website at www.recklesspassion.com. Click on the link marked "reckless prayer". See you soon!

About your facilitator: Hari and his wife Alexis live near the bustling "downtown" area of Belchertown, where they moved shortly after they got married in 2005 in nearby Florence. Originally from India, Hari has been on a journey of exploring prayer and faith in wildly different cultures and religions ever since his family moved to live in Islamic Yemen when he was a young Hindu boy in 1983. He writes about his Christian faith life on his website at www.recklesspassion.com.



... After "The House of the World"
Oh boy! Here he comes to ask me to do something again!

That's the way I felt when Todd approached me in late September to act in "The House of the World". I accepted the invitation, studied the manuscript, lost some sleep, missed some Patriots football games, attended the rehearsals and performed.

What did I experience from this endeavor? I gained a larger sense of community in this Congregation by studying, working and laughing with many people known only formerly by appearance. Note - we have many good people in our church community, of all ages. I gained a more intimate understanding of the teachings provided in this story and the impact on others of our selfishness, greed and intolerance.

Was this the "first annual" performance of this story? Maybe the Congo Players of Flashlight Theatre will bring it back for a second time by popular demand. We did have folks from other communities in our audiences and we may get requests from them and even our own for an encore.

To Todd and all the Farnsworth's, thanks for listening to the radio play, for the touch on the arm and encouragement to put the play on stage, for getting the permission, the actors, the carolers, the props and the vision to share this with your community. I feel that we are all family.

Now, perhaps the next time a request is made for fund raising volunteers, or membership on some committee, or even from Todd, I will step forward and sign up and not have to be "talked into it". I will know that a positive experience is mine for the taking. I will know that what I do may have a positive impact on others. I will know I can share in the workload of the task at hand and come out a stronger person, with new friends and with a smile on my face. I am now a firm believer that it is more blessed to give than to receive - even if I have to stretch out of my comfort zone!

Won't you sign up for a positive experience, too?

*David Crutchfield, with endorsement and encouragement from Jane
[George & Marge, The House of the World, 2006 performance]*

SEMINARIAN NEWS

Tom O'Brien is moving on through the process of becoming ordained as a UCC minister. Having just completed his first semester at Andover Newton Theological Seminary, he is preparing for a Winterim session and the Spring semester classes. On Tuesday, January 9, Tom, Todd, and a representative of the Board of Deacons will meet with the Church and Ministry committee of the Hampshire Association to review Tom's application and credentials for In Care Status. Being received "in care" is an important part of a seminarian's journey toward ordination, as it widens the individual's relationship beyond the local church, into the greater body of the United Church of Christ. A student must be held "in care" by an association in order to later apply for ordination in our denomination. Please join in praying for Tom as he continues his sojourn in faith.



Potluck Breakfast

Communion Sunday Potluck Breakfasts continue on the first Sunday of each month at 8 a.m. We will gather again on February 4th. The breakfast begins at 8 a.m. but drop-ins are welcome anytime. Ideas for dishes to bring include breakfast casseroles, fruit, bagels, juice, kid friendly foods, etc. Donations of paper products are also needed. See Audrey Miller for more information and plan to join us on the first Sunday of each month for great food and fellowship!



Annual Pledge

Its not to late to make your annual pledge to the church. If you would like a pledge card please see Lucy Jamgochian anytime! Thank you in advance for your generosity.



Women Gather for Dinner

Each month the women of the church gather together for food and conversation, usually at a local restaurant. See Audrey Miller for more information.



Gone With the Winnie...

Please note: As of this mailing, Winnie Shattuck may be contacted at the following address:

Winnie Shattuck
Woodcrest village
356 Main St. Room 11
New London, NH 03257



May God bless Winnie and her family in this new chapter of their lives.

Other meetings this month:



Deacons - Tuesday, 9th - 7 PM.
Finance Board
Wednesday, 10th - at 7 PM
Buildings & Grounds work day -
Saturday, 13th - 8 AM

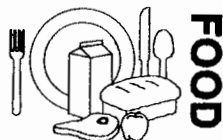
Annual Meeting

The 2007 Church Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday January 28th in the sanctuary immediately following our worship service. We will have one service that morning, at 9:30 a.m. All are welcome to attend. Please join in planning the future of our church!

U MASS Concessions

U Mass Concessions have started again! If you can lend a hand for a 4-hour shift at the concession stand at a U. Mass game, please sign up on the sign up sheet located in the entryway. This is a great fundraiser for our church. Thanks!

Found. Director for the Helping Hands Food Pantry



Our thanks to *Cindy Fuller* for taking over the job of food pantry director beginning February 1st. We would like to offer sincere thanks to Linda Gumlaw for *all she has done* over the past couple of years to bring the food pantry to where it is today. Her time and attention was apparent each month when *so many families* were continually assisted.

Thank you Linda, and thanks to Cindy for offering to take over this very vital outreach in our community. We appreciate you both!

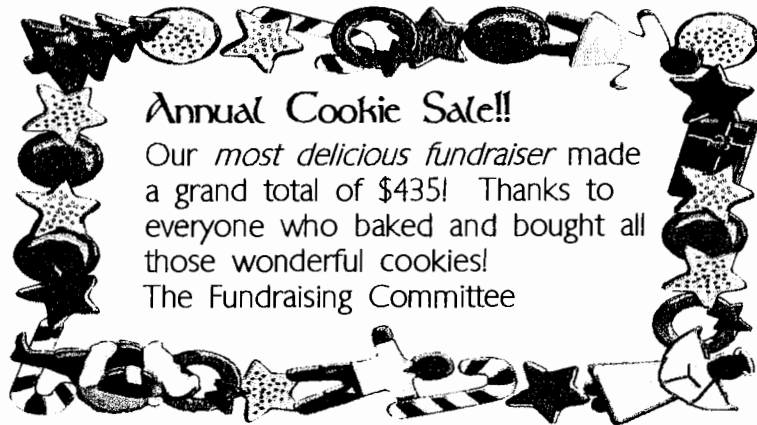
Helping Hands Helpers Meeting

There will be another meeting of all those interested in working with the Helping Hands Food Pantry on Tuesday January 9th at 7 PM in the Parish House. See Linda Gumlaw for more information.



Annual Cookie Sale!!

Our *most delicious fundraiser* made a grand total of \$435! Thanks to everyone who baked and bought all those wonderful cookies!
The Fundraising Committee



Holiday Happening

A HUGE thank you to each and everyone who donated to and helped out with the Helping Hands Holiday Happening! It was another great success. The less fortunate in our community and beyond had a *much merrier* Christmas because of your generosity.

Thank You

Another Thank You...

Thanks to the Conklin Family and others who generously donated the working microwaves to the church kitchen to replace the one that died. Everyone appreciates your contribution!

BEEN THERE, AND BACK AGAIN

The Board of Deacons has purchased BUCC bumper stickers for members of the congregation wishing to display where they've been and where they keep going week after week. As part of the deacon's campaign to raise awareness of our church's presence in the community you are invited to take a sticker free of charge and place it on your vehicle. The oval passport stickers (see picture) have the church name and website address on them. Please see a deacon or call the church office to get your sticker today!

An Evening with Rev. John Thomas

General Minister and President of the
United Church of Christ

Andover Newton Theological
School will host a presentation
and conversation with

Rev. John Thomas, on

Wednesday, January 17th, 2007 from 7:15 p.m. – 9
p.m. in The Peck Room at ANTS (Worcester Hall).

John will speak with us about what is “current” in
the UCC: the “Still Speaking” identity campaign;
plans for the upcoming General Synod in Hartford,
CT (June 2007); etc., and will answer questions.

The public is warmly welcome. Light refreshments
will be served. For more information call Jennifer
Shaw, at 617-964-1100 ext. 228. Directions are
available at www.ants.edu



Join our Prayer Line

All are welcome to
participate in the Church
Prayer Line. If you have
any concerns or celebrations
you would like to share please call Jane Gabbie
at 323-7832 Also, if you would
like to participate by being a part of the line,
please let Jane know. And now, prayers can be
shared by email too. Send your concerns and
celebrations to prayers@belchertownucc.org



The Home Department and CWS Health Kits

The Home Department is seeking your help in
collecting items for Health Kits for Church
World Service. The items needed are:

Hand towels

Wash cloths

Combs

Metal nail files or nail
clipper

Bars of soap

Toothbrushes

Tubes of toothpaste

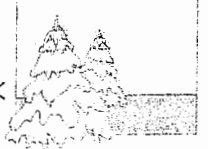
Band-Aids

This will be an ongoing collection and all
donations can be left in the basket in the
narthex. See Jane Gabbie with any questions.
Thanks for your support of this very important
ministry.



Snow Cancellations

In case of severe weather, please
tune to ABC Channel 40 or check
WGGB.com for our listing. If
worship is cancelled, we will be listed.



Choir

The Senior Choir now
rehearses on Sunday evenings
at 7 PM. Please consider
making a *joyful noise* by joining the choir!



Monthly Clean Up

January – “Fun”raising Committee
February – Buildings & Grounds

Events in Our Community and Beyond

Boar's Head Festival

The annual Boar's Head Festival at Trinity United
Methodist Church, 361 Sumner Ave., Springfield
will be held this year January 12 – 14, 2007.
The Boar's Head Festival is a dramatization of
the Epiphany story on stage using live animals
and audience participation. It takes the
audience from Christianity ancient secular origins
to the joyous arrival of the Messiah. Tickets
can be ordered by calling 413-733-4759.

Mourning Reflections

There will be a 10-week writing
bereavement group starting January 30
from 6 PM – 8:30 PM. They will be
meeting in the Northampton area. It
will be led by *Amherst Writers
and Artists* certified facilitator,
Becky Jones, Chaplain. No
writing experience needed. All writing levels
welcome. A brief phone conversation is
required. Call Becky at 413-582-2869.





SUPPORT GROUP FOR WOMEN

Is there someone giving you a hard time?

Is your relationship stressful or hurtful?

Do you find yourself needing a place to go to talk
- to get advice - to get resources?

Please contact the church office (Monday-
Thursday 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.) for further

information on dates and meeting times at 413-
323-7442. Free child care is provided.

.....

Regular Worship Schedule

2nd - 5th Sundays of each month:

9 AM contemporary worship, Sunday school and
Youth Group

10:15 AM a more familiar worship service

1st Sunday of each month is communion Sunday
with one service at 9:30 am. Sunday school &
youth group are held.



Church Office Hours

Monday-Thursday

9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Church Phone - 413-323-7442

Please leave a message.

Church e-mail address -

belchertownucc@yahoo.com

Web site - www.belchertown-ucc.org

**Submit information for the weekly bulletin by
Wednesday at 10 AM.**

Thank you.



From the Historic District Bylaw Commission of
Belchertown

Our church has been selected by the Historic
District Commission to receive a 2006 preservation
award. These awards are given to property owners
within the district who have shown a commitment
to the preservation of their historically significant
homes. Their decision was based upon our action in
safeguarding the historic integrity of the church
building and it's setting. This award is given out of
appreciation of our role in preserving both a part of
the town's cultural heritage and an important
landmark of Belchertown's past.



Church Newsletter

Articles for *The Grapevine*, are due on the 24th of
each month. Leave your announcement with the
church office via e-mail, answering machine or call
between 9 a.m. & 12 p.m. 413-323-7442

Thank you.

The Grapevine is published monthly by
Belchertown UCC

Staff: Rev. Todd Farnsworth, Pastor,
Dan Monte Music Director,
Terry Hall, Office



Men and women everywhere sigh
on December 26 and say they're glad
Christmas is all over for another year.
But it isn't over. "Unto you is born...
a Savior." It's just beginning! And it
will go on forever.

Eugenia Price



**THE BEAUTIFUL TRUTH
ABOUT ME**

A while ago my wife, Jerry, at-
tended a women's retreat led by
Sister Susan. A few days after return-
ing from the retreat, Jerry received a
letter from Sister Susan which was
concluded with this prayer: "Oh God,
help me to believe the truth about
myself no matter how beautiful it is."

What a prayer! Does it shock you?

"O God, help me believe the truth
about myself no matter how beautiful
it is."

Hard to pray, isn't it? Hard be-
cause unfortunately even the message
of Christianity, the most affirming of
all religions, has come through as
self-denial. To be sure, there is a
place for self-denial, but that must
not be seen as self-depreciation or
any form of devaluing self.

Write the prayer down - memorise
it. Pray it daily - it will change your
life. "O God, help me believe the
truth about myself no matter how
beautiful it is."

*Maxie Dunnam from Perceptions:
Observations on Everyday Life*



January 2007



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	 1	2	3	4	5	6 Epiphany 
7 8 AM Potluck Breakfast 9:30 AM Communion, Worship, Sunday school & Youth Group 7 PM Choir	8	9 7 PM - Helping Hands Food Cupboard Meeting All welcome! 7 pm Deacon's Meeting	10	11	12	13 8 am Buildings & Grounds Work Day
14 9 AM Worship, Sunday school & Youth Group 10:15 AM Worship 7 PM Choir	15 Martin Luther King Jr. Day	16	17	18	19	20
21 9 AM Worship, Sunday school & Youth Group 10:15 AM Worship 7 PM Choir	22	23	24	25	26	27
28 NOTE: One service today at 9:30 AM, Sunday school & Youth Group *ANNUAL MEETING following worship 7 pm - Choir	29	30	31			

HAPPY NEW YEAR!
2007



Mission Moment

It's Not Just History

Heavenly Parent, your loving warmth comes to us in the sun's first rays and the moon's first beams. You have placed us at the edge of Your sea where we can walk paths like those Christ walked. By Your grace, may we always give thanks, always contribute joyfully, and always offer our energies to bring hope and compassion for all Your creatures. Amen."

*A prayer from Eastport Central
Congregational Church, UCC,
the Rev. John MacDuffie, Pastor.*

The steeple at Eastport Central Congregational Church, UCC, in Eastport, Maine, receives the sun's light each morning before any other UCC church—and possibly before any church in the country!

Church steeples are enduring parts of the landscape in much of the country. In many places, they rise above everything else in town—symbols of hope, with meaning for church and community members alike.

Like 95% of all UCC churches, Eastport Central Congregational Church was built before 1960—well before 1960, in the case of Eastport. Church buildings, and their steeples, often require costly maintenance. Fortunately, in the United Church of Christ, our congregations can turn to the Cornerstone Fund, which provides loans to churches when, frequently, banks turn them down. Not only that, the loans—for refurbishing, rebuilding, and refinancing debt—are provided at the lowest possible interest rate.

Established in 1996, the Cornerstone Fund is ready to help the churches of the United Church of Christ endure well into the 21st century. As the UCC celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, let's celebrate the work we're doing to make sure our churches don't become "history"!

While the primary mission of the Cornerstone Fund is lending, the loans are made possible through investments by UCC congregations, Associations, Conferences, and individuals! If you are interested in investing in mission this way, visit cornerstonefund.org to learn more.

God is still speaking,

Mission Moment

The United Church of Christ in American History

How much do you know about the role the United Church of Christ has played in American history?

Today's United Church of Christ is the result of a 1957 merger between American Protestant denominations with rich histories of their own: the Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church.

In the month of November, we can look back and celebrate these notable events—several of them historic "firsts" in the history of our country:

- Lemuel Haynes is the first African American ordained by a Protestant denomination (1785). On this date in November, 1780, he is licensed to preach. He becomes a world-renowned preacher and writer.
- Seeking spiritual freedom, forebears of the United Church of Christ leave Europe for the New World. Later generations know them as the Pilgrims. Their pastor, John Robinson, urges them as they depart to keep their minds and hearts open to new ways. God, he says, "has yet more light and truth to break forth out of his holy Word." On this day in 1620, their ship, the Mayflower, made first landfall after a 66-day voyage.

God is still speaking,