

Historian's Notebook

by George Blanchard

This has been a very interesting (?) winter so far, at least weather wise. The so called 100 year ice storm of

Dec. 11-12 was devastating to thousands of people: no electricity, telephone for some up to two weeks, therefore no heat, spoiled food, etc. But the most damage was to the trees, described by a friend in an e-mail received after Christmas - "When we drove through Holden and Rutland it looked like a tornado had gone through and broken the trees."

Well, we survived and now look forward (!!) to the bitter cold forecast as I write this article.

One benefit of the weather has been extra time to catch up on my reading: magazines have a knack of piling up.

In the Jan.-Feb. issue of Yankee Magazine, there is an interesting article - "The Changing Face of New England's Churches - increasingly, New England's churches aren't defined by the white steeple on the village green, but by evangelical megachurches that are changing the religious landscape."

Two decades ago there were virtually no megachurches in New England, today there are 18.

A megachurch has a weekly attendance of 2,000 or more. I believe that Liberty Church in Shrewsbury and at the former Chestnut St. Congregational Church is one of the 18.

The article centers on three of them - Faith Church in New Milford, CT, Grace Church in Lexington and Jubilee Christian Church in Mattapan.

Jubilee meets in a converted supermarket seating 1,250, holding 3 services each Sunday.

Grace Chapel was formed in 1948 but grew as a megachurch in the '80's and '90's. They recently completed a 75,000 sq. ft. addition which included a gym, a café and a children's center. On a given Sunday 3,000 people attend four services with 5,000 at Christmas and Easter. Their parking lots are full every day of the week unlike the nearby Episcopal and Unitarian churches.

Faith Church, from the picture, is a sprawling, new structure built on 35 acres consisting of a sanctuary seating 1,500, a "SonBucks" café and a K through 12 academy.

Pastor Santora's goal is to continue membership growth at 20 to 30% which means 500 "new Christians" annually. Santora plans to add an 11,000 sq. ft. youth center with a skate park, an auditorium, iPod lounge and Internet café. "Build it and the kids will come."

Sometimes I think it would be exciting to belong to a megachurch like these but I know I really prefer what we have although it would be nice to have a membership like it was 25+ years ago.

If you can get your hands on this issue of Yankee I think you will find it very informative.

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There was an article in the July 21 issue of Time about Nelson Mandella. To me he is an exceptional human being. As the article explains - "The key to understanding Mandela is those 27 years in prison. The man who walked onto Robben Island in 1964 was emotional,

headstrong, easily stung. The man who emerged was balanced and disciplined. He is not and never has been introspective. When asked how the man who emerged from prison differed from the willful young man who had entered it, he replied 'I came out mature.'"

This article reminded me of his autobiography - *Long Road to Freedom*. It is one of the all time best books I have ever read.



During 2008, the Wider Church Covenant Ministry has continued to focus on poverty, hunger and housing related

issues and distributed over \$16,000 to local, national and international agencies that address these problems. The following are some Thank You notes the Wider Church Covenant Ministry received from recipients.

To United Congregational Church,
On behalf of the Worcester Pastoral Counseling Center, we thank you for your donation to our Assistance Fund. May everyone at United Congregational Church enjoy a blessed Christmas.

Gratefully,
Seth Bernstein

To United Congregational Church,
We are grateful for the warm and

friendly reception given to the Pommern Village Choir from Tanzania, last October. We are most appreciative of United's generous donation to help sponsor their visit to Massachusetts.

We continue to give thanks for the generous response shown by so many. The result will be the drilling of several new wells to provide safe water for Pommern and the surrounding area. In this regard, it was wonderful to receive word that United has decided to fund an entire well. We are so grateful and amazed by the promise of such a generous gift.

Again, many thanks to United for helping to bring significant improvement to the daily life to these friends in East Africa.

Sincerely yours,
The Plymouth Church in Framingham
Peter Cook, Senior Minister

Dear Friends,
The Worcester Area Mission Society, UCC gratefully acknowledges receipt of your contribution in the amount of \$1,000.00 for its 2008 Operations. This donation will be used to continue our mission in the Worcester area. Please convey our appreciation to the members of United Congregational Church for this donation.

Sincerely,
Mellyn Shurtleff, WAMS Assistant

United,
Thank you for your generous support and active involvement in 2008 as we have worked together to create hope and

opportunity for hungry people.

May the shepherds' good news of Christ's birth among us bring you peace and joy in the New Year.

The Staff of Bread for the World

United,

With your support in the coming year, the Children's Defense Fund will continue to work on behalf of children in America to ensure a level playing field for every child. Every step we take to improve the lives of children improves the lives of all of us.

Wishing you happiness and peace in the New Year,

Children's Defense Fund

Marian Wright Edelman, President

United,

Thank you! For your part in giving us a summer filled with Camp memories.

Best Wishes for a Joyous Holiday Season,

Todd Stewart, Campers, and Staff of Camp Putnam

The following "Thank You" is in response to United's gift of \$200.00 to benefit Memorial Hospice.

United,

We are most grateful for your recent gift to the UMass Memorial Foundation and for your contribution to the work we achieve here every day. Thank you.

We appreciate your generosity.

Mary C. Defeudis

Chair, UMass Memorial Foundation

2009 STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

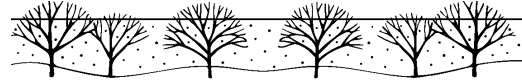
73 pledge replies have been received as of 12/31/08, compared to 98 pledge replies at the same time last year. The 2009 church budget, which includes the 2009 pledges, is being developed.

The support for our church is deeply appreciated in these uncertain times.

Sincerely,

The Stewardship of Resources Ministry

SUNDAY WORSHIP IN MERRIMAN HALL



We continue to worship in Merriman Hall, and we will return to the sanctuary on April 5, Palm Sunday.

Even with the efficiency of new boilers, it is still our desire to be responsible stewards not only of our own financial resources, but also of the earth's precious resources.

We are always the people of God, the Body of Christ, whenever we come together to pray and sing and worship God.

We are always a community of God's beloved wherever we find ourselves. We are always a community filled with the Spirit as we try to live out our faith on whatever new paths God calls us.

So please come so that we can continue to worship together as a faithful and faith-filled community!



March 21, 2009

Plan ahead for the

CHUCK & MUD

30th ANNIVERSARY SHOW

at the Hanover Theatre featuring

•the Hole in the Dam Band

•Riverbend

•Blackstone Valley Bluegrass Band

•Rick Porter

and many more surprise guests.

This is a benefit concert for

Chestnut Nursery School.

The GREEN ROOSTER
CoffeeHouse

Doors open 7:30

All shows 8:00 p.m.

508-798-3010



Jan 31 **MAD RIVER** – This area's original garage band. \$12.00

Feb 7 **BILL STAINES** – America's troubadour. \$15.00

Feb 28 **PLAIN FOLK** – Worcester's best!

Thanks for dropping in!
We always need volunteers.

The Sunday School Class presents a



Saturday, February 14 3:00 p.m.
Robinson Room.

Come and enjoy Tea and Treats as the children of our church serve you.

The cost is \$5.00/person

RSVP by February 10

Heidi Ebers 508-755-7882



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Mary Dzaugis	2
Curt Berggren	4
Martha Jernberg	5
Karen Sanford	7
Daniel Hansen	9
Amy Hennig	11
Robert Dik	12
Jan Scott Orczyk	13
Jeffrey Prunier	16
Arline Kimball	
Edward Sisson	18
Abbey Beth Kielinen	20
Donna Enberg	23
Thomas Healey	24
Roy Bourgault	25
Margaret Manoogian	28
Judith Quinn	29

VNA CARE HOSPICE
Spring 2009 Grief Support Group
*A general support group for adults who
are coping with the death of a loved one*

When: *Alternate Tuesday evenings
beginning February 17, for
seven meetings (dates below)*

Time: *6:00 p.m. — 7:30 p.m.*

Location: *United Congregational Church*



2009

February 17

March 3, 17, and 31

April 14 and 28

May 12

*There is no fee for participating
in this group*

*New members accepted up until the
2nd or 3rd meeting*

*To register please call Susan Tarantino
800 521 5539 ext. 5624 or email
starantino@vnacarenetwork.org*

SECOND SUNDAY

HEALING
SERVICE



In accord with
one of our most
ancient of
Christian
traditions, the
Diaconate

would like to offer Healing Services on a regular basis. Immediately following worship on the second Sunday of the month, the pastor and a Deacon will be available to anoint and offer a brief prayer for those of you who would like to receive this healing blessing. It is our desire as pastor and as Deacons to provide for your spiritual needs.

If you wake up Sunday morning, and it is snowing, be assured that Church will still be held. We will not cancel worship, but we urge you to use discretion for your own safety.



SafePlace Meeting in Worcester

Have you lost someone to suicide? Samaritans offers Grief Support Services for members of the community who have lost loved ones to suicide. SafePlace is an ongoing, confidential support group that provides survivors of suicide loss with the chance to give and receive much needed support and understanding. SafePlace in Worcester meets the first and third Tuesday of the month from 7 to 9 p.m. at The Bridge, 4 Mann Street, Worcester, MA. For directions and more information on Samaritans' Grief Support Services, please call Kim Kates at 617-536-2460.