

THE JOYBELL

The Baptist Church of Grafton

An American Baptist Church

Rev. Frank Armstrong, Interim Pastor

(508) 839-4911 Church Office

www.thebaptistchurchofgrafton.org

David and Diane Libbey, Editors (508) 839-2561

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Message from Pastor Frank

To date, I have written over 35 Pastor's Pages sharing my thoughts and reflections on the meaning of Easter and how that should influence our lives as a resurrection community.

It has always been a challenge to communicate an Easter message each year that cannot be compromised or embellished with exaggeration in an effort to add something new to a story that does not need any of my glittering generalities, or attempts to give the message a new meaning with contemporary application.

Easter is His story and His invitation to experience life as it was meant to be, life beyond life, a life full of hope and promise that in the end, God will always have the last word and death is no more because **He has risen, He has risen indeed.** And because He is risen, so shall we!

We are all moving non-stop through various stages in our lives; we are just not sure we know where we are and where we're going. **Easter is a signpost** inviting us to get our bearings and travel a new way to a new place to live a new kind of life. These are moments in time; passages that we cannot ignore. And each of these stages must be guided by the hope that is ours in Jesus Christ.

Today I write my first Easter letter as an Interim Pastor (Partially retired!) while still trying to pull away from having failed at retirement and embracing this stage of my own life! This is really bittersweet! It is bitter because I have moved away from the joys, challenges, and at times discouragements full time ministry affords, to embrace the discipline of setting boundaries in terms of time commitment and the unexpected needs that arise and cannot be ignored as an Interim.

Sweet, because I believe I have spread out before me an opportunity to use my identity, gifts, and call in a new way that will hopefully shape an adventure that

will allow me to continue my call. I cannot forget, and neither can you, that we have been called for life.

So, having said this, I am asking you to set aside some time for us to share, as a community, in the services and events we have prepared for this Easter celebration. Consider Maundy Thursday service; it has always been a special service for me because of its simplicity and intimacy. It will be our time to break bread and drink from the cup as our Lord so commanded as a part of common-unity in our ministry together.

Consider also; Good Friday service: I see this as an awe-inspiring service. Seven members of the church will reflect on each of the seven last words of Christ on the Cross: we will sing a verse of different hymns in between each reflection, and have introspective prayer. **And then comes Sunday!** Of all the worship experiences I have ever participated in, this is my summit experience. I pray it will be yours.

This is the one celebration with which the secular society, the malls, and Easter bunny cannot compete. It is here that God reaches out to the believer, the seeker, and yes, even the skeptic with an unconditional love that invites all to celebrate what He has done for us in life, through suffering, and finally in His glorious Resurrection.

I feel abundantly blessed, humbly honored, and sincerely grateful to be a part of our Easter celebration this year and will cherish every moment. Our time together, though seemingly short in tenure has, nevertheless, drawn many of us closer as pastor and people.

Already we have walked together through times of joy and times of grief; we shared our heartfelt desires and hopes that God will honor our community of faith with growth and a viable witness (Baptist witness) in Grafton. You may say that I'm a dreamer, but I still hold on to the belief that if only by the Grace of God, the best is ahead for BCG.

In essence, I want to say thank you, thank you so much for living the Gospel in word and in deed. And let's work together to set the foundation for a future ministry in Grafton as we walk together, worships together and prayer together in the months ahead for guidance and discernment.

But for now, I want to leave you with these words from Phillip Yancey:

"I take hope in Jesus' scars. From the perspective of heaven, they represent the most horrible event that has ever happened in the history of the universe - the crucifixion - Easter turned into a memory. Because of Easter, I can hope that the tears we shed, the blows we receive, the emotional pain, the heartache over lost friends and loved ones, all these will become memories, like Jesus' scars. Scars

never completely go away, but neither do they hurt any longer. We will have re-created bodies, a re-created heaven and earth. We will have a new start, an Easter start."

-Philip Yancey, "The Jesus I Never Knew" (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

Our time has come for a "New Easter start."

Your Interim pastor,
Frank

Mission Committee News

We welcomed two new members to our committee, Priscilla Barnes and Mary Shapazian.

The Mission table in Russell Fellowship Hall now has a bigger display wall. Letters that the Mission Committee receives will be displayed there.

Our Special Guest, Wendy Maxfield, Secretary for The American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts, shared information about TABCOM and ABCUSA mission programs. Her talk was about "Five Ways to Make the World a Better Place." She spoke about the five special annual offerings, where they are used and the split between TABCOM and ABCUSA and/or International Missions.

America For Christ: National 70% Local 30%

One Great Hour of Sharing: Emergency relief after natural disasters; it goes to places with greatest need.

World Mission Offering: Supports 1,800 missionaries & global partners around the world.

Retired Ministers & Missionaries: Provides emergency assistance to retired ministers, missionaries and widowed spouses worldwide

United Mission & Massachusetts Ministries Fund: National 35% Regional 65%

She asked us to consider supporting the **Massachusetts Missionary Fund** which would be 100% local TABCOM. *Copies of the Paper with this Information are available on the Mission Table in RFH.* Wendy told us we had done a great job of choosing worthy causes and having a good balance of local, national and international. She spoke about **The**

Penny Project. We decided that we would try it for the purchase of diapers and toiletries for our Grafton food Bank.

Wendy also congratulated us for taking part in the Love Gift offering which she described as support for the basic needs of many.

Diaconate News

The April prayer for the search for a new Pastor

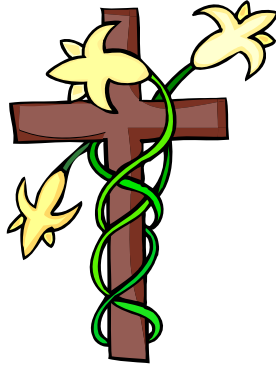
Lord, I lift up the senior members of our congregation. Thank You for every gray hair attained by righteous living. We are blessed by their example and ability to train us. Help us to be humbly submissive as we benefit from their wisdom and understanding. Help them receive the strength and power You have promised to the weary and weak. May they put their hope in You and be renewed in the process.

We Lift up our Search Team to You. Help us respect and honor them as they direct and diligently go about the tasks that will bring us a new seated Pastor for our church. May they wholeheartedly give their attention to prayer and ministry of the Word. Keep them above reproach, devoted to their families, temperate, self-controlled, and respectable. May they be gentle and honest as they deal with their search. Amen

The Diaconate is expanding its outreach to include a Deacon to join Deacon Meredith Christian, our Student Assistant Pastor, in the monthly prayer service at Holy Trinity.

We are seeking volunteers to be worship leaders during our Sunday Services. There will be sign-up sheet to allow time for scheduling and preparation. For more information, please speak with one of our Deacons.

There is a lily order form inside the Sunday bulletins. The price is \$8.00 for each lily ordered. The deadline for ordering is April 9. Please be sure to indicate if you are taking your lily home after Easter Service or that you are purchasing a lily for the Deacons to deliver to a shut-in.



Kitchen Committee News

A big Thank You to the Kitchen Crew Cooks, Dessert Table Helpers, Clean-up Crew and the people who bought the Meals! The Oven Baked Chicken Supper raised \$806.

Coffee Time: *We have a new and improved Sign-Up Sheet*

The Kitchen Committee Members want to recruit more helpers to team up with and help others provide refreshments, set up and or clean-up at Coffee Time and also after the Church Dinners. Please look for the sign-up sheets for coffee time, for dessert help and/or for clean-up after dinners. Spreading the work load helps everyone have a better time and is a wonderful opportunity to serve our church members and our visitors

Christian Education News

Campership Breakfast and Youth Sunday was held on Sunday March 12. Thank you to everyone who helped to make this a Great Day! The Breakfast was delicious. The Youth Worship Time was wonderful and it was nice to have our Youth taking part in the Morning Worship. Pastor Frank shared his 2nd Lenten Message with our Congregation and young people.

- Thank you, too, for all of the generous donations to this year's Campership Fund We have now raised \$369 toward this year's scholarships for Grotonwood, Oceanwood or Scout Camps. This is a great start to this year's fund Raising.
- Campership Banks been taken to fill with donations but there are a couple left if you would like to fill one. These are to be filled with change at home and returned by May 28 as another source of funds to help with

Camperships. We hope to have 4-5 young people attend Summer Camp this year.

Grotonwood/Oceanwood update

- Spring Awakening is April 7-9 and currently there are 6 youth and 2 chaperones going. We voted to pay the \$35 each for our two chaperones for Spring Awakening -Tom Hodgdon and Meredith Christian. We voted to give \$100 scholarships to our young people who attend but also to pay the \$35 balance if the parents cannot. Attending the Awakening will be Bella and Sabrina Grant, Sarah Stevens, Danny Christian and Ryan Searles.
- Bella Grant may be working at Grotonwood this summer
- Meredith Christian will be Pastor for a week at Oceanwood in June

Easter Sunday: After a Special Easter Sunday School Opening Worship Time we will do Easter Crafts together to share with our Church Family.

Bible Study: The Tuesday Evening Bible Study Group continues to meet on the 1st and 3rd of each month. The topic is 2 Corinthians.

Sunday School: We discussed the need for more music in our Sunday School Opening and Classes and having the young people help with it. Leta Delong- Stochaj offered to help when she can.

The Youth 4 Christ group is exploring new ways to reach out to the youth in neighboring AB churches.

Indoor Yard Sale Campership Fund Raiser!

The Annual Indoor Yard Sale **Campership Fund Raiser** will be held **April 29**, 9AM to 2PM. Here's the key information that you need to know:

- ✓ **Volunteers** are needed for set-up April 23 (after church), April 27 (6-8pm) and 28 (9am-3pm, 6-8pm).
- ✓ **Volunteers** are needed at the sale on Saturday, April 29 and for cleaning up after the sale.
- ✓ We welcome **donations** of new or like-new household items and clothing. Items [**please – no underwear at all**] brought on April 23 and later can be stored in the nursery area. Check your closets, your storage areas, your basement and attic for items that can help send our campers to Grotonwood/Oceanwood or Scout Camp for a wonderful week of Christian camping. **Please remember that we cannot take computers, monitors, or TVs. Please check with us about other electronic devices.**
- ✓ **Baked goods** should be brought in April 28 or early on the 29th.

✓ Additional areas for your shopping convenience

- **Unique Clothing Boutique** – better gently used clothing
- **Unique Craft Boutique** – crafting supplies, yarn, fabric, quilting notions etc.

Don't forget to stop by for a mouthwatering selection of goodies at the Bake Sale Table under the direction of the Mission Committee. Save space for a delicious luncheon (11:30AM-1PM) made to order by our talented Mission Committee members.

Graduation Notes

We like to include the names of graduates in the June edition. If you have someone in your family who will be graduating from high school, college or other educational institution, please drop off information at the church office by May15 in order to be included in the June edition.

Property Committee Report

Property Committee met on March 9 and discussed the following action items:

- Replacing florescent lights in RFH, the hallway and the office with LED lighting.
- Hiring a handyman for various jobs in and around the church building.
- Safety issues within the church building.
- All church clean-up date. This will be held in May when the outside work can be accomplished.

Annual Women's Prayer Breakfast

The Central Massachusetts Baptist Association Annual **Women's Prayer Breakfast** will be held **on May 6** at the First Baptist Church of Fitchburg. Registration will begin at 8:30. The breakfast will be served starting at 9:00 am; the suggested donation for breakfast is \$6.

Following the breakfast there will be time to browse the various tables such as the White Cross table, Love Gift table, and Silent Auction tables. Our speaker will be the Rev. Ken Whitson of the First Baptist Church of Fitchburg.

There is a sign-up sheet in Russell Fellowship Hall on the Clock Table. Please speak with Pat Knowlton if you have any questions or would like to arrange for a carpool.

Important Dates for April

2	Sunday	~	Fifth Sunday of Lent. 10:00 am Worship Service to God's Glory , Sunday School classes for our youth. Coffee Fellowship following Worship.
		~	11:30 am Choir Rehearsal with Pat Knowlton
4	Tuesday	~	5:15-6:15 AA Reflections Group
		~	7:30 pm Bible Study with Meredith Christian
6	Thursday	~	9:30 am Prayer Time in the Sanctuary
9	Sunday	~	Palm Sunday. 10:00 am Worship Service to God's Glory , Sunday School classes for our youth. Coffee Fellowship following Worship.
		~	11:30 am Choir Rehearsal with Pat Knowlton
10	Monday	~	10:00 am Mission Committee with Garfield Atchue
11	Tuesday	~	5:15-6:15 AA Reflections Group
12	Wednesday	~	7:00 pm Long Range Planning with Meredith Christian
13	Thursday	~	9:30 am Prayer Time in the Sanctuary
		~	7:00 pm Maundy Thursday Anabaptist Communion Liturgy in our Sanctuary
14	Friday	~	12:00 noon Good Friday Service at St. Andrews Episcopal Church
		~	2:00 pm <i>Passion of the Christ</i> –a film shown in RFH
		~	7:00 pm Good Friday Service "The Last Seven Words of Christ" in our Sanctuary
15	Saturday	~	9:00-2:00 Quilt Class with Paula Moore
16	Sunday	~	Easter Sunday. 10:00 am Worship Service to God's Glory, Sunday School classes for our youth. Coffee Fellowship following Worship.**Equal Exchange Sunday
		~	11:30 am Choir Rehearsal with Pat Knowlton
17	Monday	~	7:00 pm Board of Directors with Bert Engvall
18	Tuesday	~	5:15-6:15 AA Reflections Group
		~	7:30 pm Bible Study with Meredith Christian
19	Wednesday	~	3:00 pm Worship Service at Crescent Manor
20	Thursday	~	9:30 am Prayer Time in the Sanctuary
		~	7:00 pm Property Committee with Barry Keith
22	Saturday	~	Annual Spring Tea – CANCELLED
23	Sunday	~	10:00 am Worship Service to God's Glory , Sunday School classes for our children and youth. Coffee Fellowship following Worship.
		~	11:30 am Choir Rehearsal with Pat Knowlton

24	Monday	~	7:00 pm Deacons with Tom Hodgdon
25	Tuesday	~	5:15-6:15 AA Reflections Group
		~	7:00 pm Christian Education Committee with Susan Searles
27	Thursday	~	9:30 am Prayer Time in the Sanctuary
29	Saturday	~	9:00-2:00 Indoor Yard Sale and Mission Committee Bake Sale and Luncheon.
30	Sunday	~	10:00 am Worship Service to God's Glory , Sunday School classes for our children and youth. Coffee Fellowship following Worship. Undie Sunday collection day
		~	11:30 am Choir Rehearsal with Pat Knowlton

Every Week in April

- **Worship Service to God's Glory, 10:00am**, with Childcare and Sunday School Classes for children in Nursery through High School. Church Family Fellowship Time with refreshments following the Worship Service.
- **Deacons for the Month** – Patti Reichle, Yves Fleury and Christopher Hoffman
- **Tellers for the Month** - Christopher Hoffman and Wendell & Gloria Barthelmes
- Church Office Hours are Monday–Friday with the Church Secretary 9:00 am–11:30 am.
- Call the Church office for the Pastor's hours.

Spring Afternoon Tea

Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances, we have had to cancel Roma's Annual "Spring Tea" which was to be held on Saturday, April 22.