

THE JOYBELL

The Baptist Church of Grafton

An American Baptist Church

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Message from Pastor Frank

In Philip Yancey's book, *"What's So Amazing About Grace?"* he writes:

"During a British conference on comparative religions, experts from around the world debated what, if any, belief was unique to the Christian faith. They began eliminating possibilities. Incarnations? Other religions had different versions of gods appearing in human form. Resurrection? Again, other religions had accounts of return from death. The debate went on for some time until C.S. Lewis wandered into the room. 'What's the rumpus about?' he asked and heard in reply that his colleagues were discussing Christianity's unique contribution among world religions. Lewis responded, *'Oh, that's easy. It's grace.'*

After some discussion, the conferees had to agree. The notion of God's love coming to us free of charge, no strings attached, seems to go against every instinct of humanity. Only Christianity dares to make God's love unconditional." (P.45)

Now, we have recently celebrated the Birth of Christ, and I believe it represents one stunning example of God's Grace and Unconditional Love for all of humanity. To even think that the Creator of all that is and ever shall be would surrender His Glory and humbly come to dwell with us, and live among us, is not an easy thought to grasp.

Oh, I know we have celebrated this marvelous event, told the story over and over again, and shared it as a faith community for centuries. We get it! Or do we?

I wonder. I wonder if it has become nothing more than another holiday to celebrate, a worn out tale to tell with little or no real impact on our lives after the lights have been put away, after the gifts have been opened, the boxes discarded, the parties and family gatherings are over, and our thoughts start turning toward Lent and Easter. I wonder!

As for me, I have to confess that all too soon the demands of ministry, and life in general, often send my thoughts in another direction and the miracle of the Christmas event becomes a distant narrative with little or no impact.

However, I have learned that slippery slope can only be halted when I begin to reflect on the Grace of it all! To think that God would abandon His Glory for me and give me something I could never get but only be given out of Unconditional Love is quite overwhelming and really does *“go against every instinct of my humanity.”*

Nevertheless, it is His Gift to me and to you. And it is a gift freely given.

Grace is also supremely unique insofar as our work and efforts to serve that Lord as fallen humanity, and at times preoccupied individuals with so many other “Worldly things” to keep us removed from the “God with us.”

For it is Grace and the love of God that is forever moving us toward our goal, forward to fulfill His purposes for us in spite of ourselves. We can embrace with full confidence the reality that our work for the Kingdom will not be hindered.

So as we move closer and closer to securing a settled pastor and claiming a new vision, God’s Grace – along with our faith and prayers – will urge us ahead toward making the right decisions for the sake of God’s Kingdom and our mission and ministry in Grafton and beyond.

There's only one catch. Like any other gift, the gift of grace can be ours only if we reach out and take it. Maybe being able to reach out and take it is a gift, too. What do you think?

Blessings,
Pastor Frank

Pastoral Search Committee Update

The Pastoral Search Committee has been making substantial progress in our search for a new Pastor. Prior to the end of 2017 we completed a comprehensive Church Profile and submitted to TABCOM for their review. The Profile was assembled using the process recommended by TABCOM, and it contains 125 pages of material describing various aspects of the Church including: Current Member Information, Demographic Information, Church History, Congregational Style and Culture, How Others See Us, Our Church and Worship Life, What We Believe, Our Vision for Ministry, Roles and Responsibilities of the Church, Priorities of the Church and our detailed Requirements for a full-time Settled Pastor. TABCOM will use the Profile to do a nation-wide search of Pastoral Candidates who meet our requirements and propose them to the Committee for re-

view. Most recently TABCOM has completed an initial survey and forwarded to us 6 candidate profiles for our review. In the coming weeks the Committee will be evaluating these initial candidates against our requirements, and working with TABCOM to refine the list and identify our top selections to contact for interviews. In summary we are confident that we are following the correct process identify the most suitable Settled Pastor for the Church, and are on schedule.

Finance Committee Update

At the church's Annual Meeting held on January 21, an Operating Budget of \$115,396, including the impact of paying a new settled pastor for part of the year, was approved by the church membership. The good news is that through anticipated income and use of Funds on Hand, the church will be able to support our 2018 operating expenses. The not-so-good news is that in order to balance this budget, we will use nearly \$12,400 of Funds on Hand - we are dipping into our accumulated savings to balance the budget. This is due largely to Planned Giving falling well below its goal - and below actual 2017 pledging.

At the end of 2017, our Funds on Hand were almost \$59,000. However, in addition to balancing the 2018 operating budget, there will be other areas that will need to use these Funds on Hand. These include covering increased pastoral expense for several years; moving expenses for the new settled pastor; and paying for some potential repairs and updates to the parsonage. We project that aside from a small emergency fund, our Funds on Hand will be exhausted within 3-4 years.

Unfortunately, Planned Giving now covers only 51% of the 2018 operating expenses, down from well over 60% a few years ago. This is happening because anticipated expenses are growing while Planned Giving is not keeping up. The remainder of our operating income comes from a variety of other sources. Non-pledged Gifts and Trust Interest have grown significantly in recent years. This growth is good news, although Gift income is very hard to predict. Income from the annual Church Fair (also growing) and fund-raising dinners are two other vital sources of income. The amount of work done by many people to contribute towards the success of the fund-raising dinners and the Church Fair is remarkable. If Planned Giving were more robust, we could reduce the number of these events OR the amount of Funds on Hand needed to cover operating expenses could be reduced.

So, if anyone would like to contribute towards the financial health of our church, ***it is not too late to do so!*** A pledge form is included in this issue of the "Joybell". If you have questions about Planned Giving (aka "pledging"), feel free to speak with any member of the Finance Committee: Bert Engvall, Chair; David Libbey, Treasurer; Chris Hoffman, Financial Secretary; or Cyndy Engvall.

America For Christ Offering

In February we will participate in our second special offering of 2018 the America for Christ (AFC) Offering 2018, which seeks to raise \$1,250,000 to support American Baptist mission and ministry across the United States and Puerto Rico.

The theme for the AFC Offering 2018 is “Equipping Disciples” based on this Scripture: “The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-13, NRSV).

ABHMS has a vision of a better world—one transformed by the healing power of the Gospel and by passionate American Baptist leaders and disciples who are creating and building ministries that meet human needs.

Kitchen Committee News

Your Kitchen Committee has been very busy behind the scenes in January. It was discovered with the cold weather that mice had taken up residence in the kitchen. The Kitchen crew took everything out of the drawers and cupboards to disinfect and organize the kitchen for the new year. In doing so they discovered two holes that allowed the mice to invade. An exterminator was called [paid for by an anonymous donor] to tackle the problem. Steve Reichle worked to close the holes. So our kitchen is pristine clean, organized and ready for the remainder of the supper season.

The Kitchen group also put on a delicious Shepherd’s Pie dinner on January 20. There were many in attendance and the final total for the evening was \$434. As a special treat Susanne suggested that all diners sing the *Johnny Appleseed Grace* together. A benefit from the dinner was that there was food to share at the next day’s Annual Meeting!

February Opportunity to Enjoy a Dinner Out

Our kitchen crew will be serving another of its mouth-watering public dinners this month! On **Saturday, February 17** a **Corned Beef and Cabbage Dinner** will be the choice meal of the night. It will be served starting at 5:30 p.m. and includes tasty corned beef with all the fixings plus our world-famous dessert buffet. The

suggested price of admission for each diner is a **\$12 donation**. Please call the Church Office [508-839-4911] for reservations or sign up in Russell Hall. Reservations are not required but will make the preparation of the correct amount of food much easier. We are looking forward to having another big crowd and some great fellowship around the tables.

Diaconate Report

The Deacons met on January 22. At this first meeting with new Diaconate Chair Ruth Ballantyne the group discussed the following:

- Deacons will have a training session to go over the duties and procedures of Diaconate members in February.
- Pat Knowlton, Chair for the Caring Ministry, reported that they will be meeting in February.
- Meredith Christian makes monthly prayer church service visits to Crescent Manor with Pat Knowlton on the third Wednesday of each month in the afternoon. Please let Meredith know if you would like to accompany her on Crescent Manor Nursing Home visits.
- The Diaconate considered a request from the Organ Repair Committee to pay for essential tuning and repair work using Memorial Fund monies. This was approved by the Diaconate and has been sent to the Board of Directors for its consideration.
- The Diaconate will be working with Pastor Frank in preparing for Lenten Services. Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, is on February 14 this year.

If you know of anyone who is a shut-in who would like to receive communion or have a call or visit from the pastor, please bring this to the attention of the Diaconate Chair, Ruth Ballantyne or the Church Secretary, who will coordinate this.

Organ Repair Report

As many of you know, our organ has been in need of repair for the last few years. The Board of Directors formed a committee to discuss and to plan for the best way of addressing the organ's issues. At present it needs a major tune-up, a new swell box motor and a few other items. Peter Ballantyne is chairing the committee and he has made some great progress. The Church had an estimate of the cost of repairs from this past summer when some basic repairs were made. The organ company has agreed to honor those estimates. At its meeting on January 22, the Diaconate voted to use the money from the Memorial Fund to pay for the repairs.

On Sunday January 28 the Board of Directors met to listen to Peter's report and the recommendation of the Deacons. There was a positive vote by the Board of Directors, so there will be a **Business Meeting of the Church Membership on February 4**. This will allow the entire congregation to understand the project and vote on whether or not to spend the money for the repairs. It is important that everyone understand the situation, how it will be funded and when the repairs will happen. [The Moderator promises to have everyone home long before the kick off of Super Bowl LII. at 6:30 pm] This meeting will be your opportunity to ask questions and make your voice heard. It will also insure the orderly progression for the organ repairs.

Christian Education News

The Christian Education Committee met on January 25 and discussed the following items:

- The Committee accepted with regret the resignation of Leta Delong-Stochaj from the committee and as our representative on the Pastoral Search Committee
- A Child Safety Covenant that is mandated by our insurance company was approved and will be forwarded to the Board of Directors for its approval. This Covenant states that we "want to provide safe, quality programs for the children and youth that participate in the ministries of our church and because we want to protect both those children and youth participating as well as those persons working with children and/or youth." This covenant will become part of our Christian Education policy.
- Carols and Memories Service that was well received and should be continued.
- Bible Study is working on the Book of Revelations. Sherri Bicknell brought her Braille version to the last gathering and participated by reading passages for the group.
- Plans are in the works to offer an Adult Sunday School Classes. These will be short duration sessions [4 weeks], open to all adults. Pastor Frank and Meredith are working on the details.
- Plans are underway to offer a Vacation Bible School at our church this summer. Several programs are being evaluated. This will be open to the community and invitations will be sent to all the local churches inviting their youth to join with us. Donna hopes to have this ready to announce in April.
- There will not be a campership breakfast this year but there will be a Youth Sunday with a mother/son team as our guest speakers.
- The Annual Yard Sale will happen along with plans for making the community more aware of our church. One idea was to provide small bottles of water during the Beatles For Sale concert on the Common with labels inviting people to come to church for life giving water.

New Custodian Needed

Our good and faithful custodian, **Garfield Atchue**, has decided to give up his vac and mop. He has served for many years and has kept us in good shape. But now we need to find a replacement. In the past we have been fortunate to find someone within the Church Family who was will to do the job and was paid for his service. The Property Committee will be updating the job description and is actively looking for a replacement. If you know of someone who is looking for a small part time job please let Steve Reichle know. At present the job does not include mowing the lawn in the summer or shoveling snow in the winter. Like all committee chairs Steve has a mail box in the Office. You can call him or leave information in the Property Committee mailbox in the office.

Property Committee

The Property Committee is developing proposals for the updating the Parsonage. In the near future there will be a business meeting for the entire congregation to present the upgrades under consideration, their cost and a plan to fund the work.

The Committee wishes to thank the people who have stepped up to shovel the walks and the handicapped ramp, taken out the trash, vacuumed the floors and kept the church building up and running. Also thanks to the people who worked on getting our frozen pipes to work again and who worked with the Kitchen Committee to help solve the mice issue.

2018 Pledge Form

The Baptist Church of Grafton Planned Giving for 2018

During 2018 I plan to give the following amounts:

Fund	Amount	How Often (please circle)
Operating Expenses		per week per month one time amount
Missions		per week per month one time amount
Building		per week per month one time amount
		per week

Savings		per month one time amount
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I understand that this Planned Giving is an indication of my intention to make this contribution to The Baptist Church of Grafton, and that this is *not* a legally binding contract.

Name (Please print): _____

To return this form:

Please fold, then staple or tape this form closed. Bring it to church and put it in the offering plate. Or give it to Bert Engvall, Chris Hoffman, David Libbey, or Cyndy Engvall. If you choose to put it in the offering plate, the offering counters will *not* open your form. It will be placed, unopened, in the Finance Committee mailbox at church.

Or Mail to:

Baptist Church of Grafton
PO Box 304
Grafton, MA 01519
Attn: Pledge

The Finance Committee treats all pledges confidentially.

Annual Meeting 2018

The 51st Annual meeting of the Baptist Church of Grafton was called to order by Moderator Bert Engvall on January 21 after a delicious pot luck lunch.

The meeting elected officers, several committee chairs, members of the Board of Directors, Diaconate, and Pastoral Relations Committees, and representatives to TABCOM and the Central Association.

Officers

Moderator	Diane Libbey
Clerk	Janice King
Financial Secretary	Christopher Hoffman
Treasurer	David Libbey

Chairs of Standing Committees

Diaconate	Ruth Ballantyne
Finance	Bert Engvall
Mission	Garfield Atchue
Christian Education	Donna Nichols
Property	Steve Reichle
Long Range Planning	Meredith Christian

Newly elected or Re-elected

Members-at-large, Board of Directors: Marcia Kamilewics, Morgan King, Meredith Christian, Gloria Renaud, Elaine Hewey, Steve Reichle, John Renaud, Sherri Bicknell and Kathy LaFlamme.

Members of the Diaconate Yves Fleury, Barry Keith, Christopher Hoffman, Patricia Knowlton, Donna Nichols, June Whitney, Meredith Christian, Janice King, Ray Johnson (Emeritus), Viola Johnson (Emeritus)

Members of the Pastoral Relations Committee: Cyndi Engvall, Steve Reichle, Janice King, Meredith Christian

TABCOM Delegates: Garfield Atchue and Susanne Fleming

Central Association Delegates: Jane Lewis and Pat Knowlton

The meeting accepted 2017 reports from various boards and committees and approved the 2018 budgets, including the operating budget of \$115,396.

John Renaud, on behalf of the Property Committee and David Libbey, Treasurer made an informational presentation on the Parsonage. The Church needs to make some major decisions regarding this building in preparation for a new settled pastor. There is work that needs to be done to bring the building up to code. The present tenants will be moving out by the end of February which will allow for work to be done, if approved by the Congregation, before a settled pastor would arrive. Another important consideration is whether a new pastor will want a church-provided parsonage.

Bert Engvall made an informational presentation on building the church's endowment fund. He pointed out that these funds, invested with the American Baptist Foundation, are generating a 5% return. This income makes a substantial contribution toward our operating expenses. He asked us to consider naming the church in our wills or making a living gift.

If you missed the meeting and would like a copy of the Annual Report including the Financial reports, please contact Donna Nichols in the Church Office.

Important Dates for February

1	Thursday	~	9:30am Prayer Time in the parlor
4	Sunday	~	10:00am Worship Service to God's Glory, Sunday School classes for our youth. Church Business Meeting, Coffee Fellowship following meeting.

		~	11:30am Choir Rehearsal with Pat Knowlton
5	Monday	~	10:00am Mission Committee with Garfield Atchue
		~	7:00pm Long Range Planning with Meredith Christian
6	Tuesday	~	5:15-6:15pm AA Reflections Group
			7:30pm Bible Study with Meredith Christian
8	Thursday	~	9:30am Prayer Time in the parlor
		~	7:00pm Property Committee with Steve Reichle
10	Saturday	~	9:00am -2:00pm Quilt Class with Paula Moore
11	Sunday	~	10:00am Worship Service to God's Glory, Sunday School classes for our children and youth. Coffee Fellowship following Worship.
		~	11:30am Choir Rehearsal with Pat Knowlton
		~	3:00 pm Blackstone Valley String Quartet concert
13	Tuesday	~	5:15-6:15pm AA Reflections Group
15	Thursday	~	9:30am Prayer Time in the parlor
17	Saturday	~	5:30pm Corned Beef and Cabbage Dinner
18	Sunday	~	10:00am Worship Service to God's Glory, Sunday School classes for our children and youth. Undie Sunday
19	Monday	~	7:00pm Board of Directors with Diane Libbey
20	Tuesday	~	5:15-6:15pm AA Reflections Group
		~	7:30pm Bible Study with Meredith Christian
21	Wednesday		3:00pm Crescent Manor
22	Thursday	~	9:30am Prayer Time in the parlor
			7:00 Christian Education with Donna Nichols
25	Sunday	~	10:00am Worship Service to God's Glory, Sunday School classes for our children. Coffee Fellowship following Worship. Undie Sunday
			11:30am Choir Rehearsal with Pat Knowlton
26	Monday		7:00 Deacons Meeting with Ruth Ballantyne
27	Tuesday		5:15-6:15pm AA Reflections Group

- **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 of the Month for February:** Ruth Ballantyne, Barry Keith and Yves Fleury
- **Tellers for the Month of February** Janice King and Wendell Barthelmes
- **Church Office Hours are Monday – Thursday 9:00 am–11:30 am.**
- Call the Church office for the Pastor's hours.

Blackstone Valley String Quartet Concert

On Sunday, February 11 at 3 pm our Church will host the **Blackstone Valley String Quartet** at its Sweetheart Concert. The members of the String Quartet

grew up together playing in the Whitinsville Christian School strings program. They developed a love for music and sharing that gift with others over years of performing and learning together. They feel blessed to be able to continue to share this passion! Additional details will appear in our bulletin and in the Grafton News.

Talk With Your Board and Committee Members

Several of our committees include members whose primary responsibility is to provide a link between our membership and these committees. Three important examples are the Members at Large of the Board of Directors, the members of the Pastor & Parish Relations Committee (PPRC), and our Deacons.

Please speak with any **At Large Member** about opportunities to expand or improve any of our various church activities. Your input will be brought to and discussed at one of our regular monthly Board meetings.

The **PPRC** was established to provide a way for both our pastor and members to highlight opportunities or concerns that pertain to our pastoral ministry. The PPRC meets quarterly and always appreciates your comments.

Our **Diaconate** is charged with overseeing the broader ministry of the Church. One particular area of focus is our worship services. Any of our Deacons would appreciate hearing your suggestions and comments in this area.

All input through any of these committees is treated confidentially. A list of all of our officers and committee members is posted in Russell Fellowship Hall and is included in our latest Annual Report.

What's In Your Envelope?

Several people have asked about the accounts listed on our offering envelopes and the various special envelopes included in the envelope box. What are they for and what does the church do with the money?

- **Current expenses** are the funds used to pay the church's on-going bills. This is the money that people designate on their pledge form to help keep our doors open and our message sent out to the community.
- **Missions** is the money that supports the on-going missions that the Mission Committee has designated in their budget. The Committee also raises money during the year to help support these missions.
- **Building Fund** is money that the Church puts aside to pay for repairs and upgrades to our building over and above monies budgeted for the Property Committee's work.

- **Savings Fund** – this designation replaced the old roof fund. We had used this fund to repay money borrowed from our Endowment Fund to replace our roof. It is now used to set aside money in our account to grow our assets.
- **Initial Offering** – This is a voluntary donation to help cover the cost of the envelopes.
- **Communion Offering** – This is a fund that is administered by our Deacons. It does not pay for candles or communion supplies. This money is under the direction of a three-person subcommittee – Pastor, Head Deacon and Communion Treasurer. These three must agree on the distribution of the money. In the past it has been used to help families and individuals who are in need of a helping hand to pay for emergencies. The subcommittee does not discuss, outside their meeting, who gets the money or for what reason.
- **Holiday Envelopes [Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas]**– these funds are added to our operating funds and are additional support for the Church's operating expenses.